

# AGRICULTURAL HISTORY

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## CULTURAL PATTERNS IN AGRICULTURAL HISTORY

When I was an undergraduate in college, I took several courses in history from a fine and erudite professor who was a historian of the old school.<sup>1</sup> He went to considerable pains to impress upon his students the nature and scope of history, and defined it as "accurate chronology." He explained that history can not apply, nor generalize, nor interpret. As soon as it attempts these functions, it becomes a mere tool of partisanship. Properly, it merely accumulates data with cold impartiality, and these data are attested facts, chronologically arranged, irrefutable and unchallengeable. Thus history rises above the partisan arena, disdains ephemeral moods and vogues and passions, and ascends into the pure ether of absolute truth.

This conception of history has been much discredited in the years that have passed since it was first placed before me. Although I fear that many of the older academicians still cling to it fondly out of sheer inertia, the world does move, and the better historians are moving with it. And if on this occasion I should merely break my lance against the old, nineteenth century, "scientific" history—as I might have liked to do—I could be perhaps justly accused of attacking an enemy already vanquished. The old history, which was not only "scientific," but also almost exclusively political, gave way to economic history. Economic history seems to have become entirely respectable, and social history is well on the way to becoming so. I am not quite sure just what the current social status of agricultural history is, but it, too, seems to be tolerated.

In fact, there seems to have been a definite tendency for innumerable separate bodies of historical knowledge to take over the field in which political history once had a virtual monopoly. I am not sure of the names of all these separate categories, but I

<sup>1</sup> The address given at the luncheon of the Agricultural History Society with the American Historical Association at Philadelphia on December 31, 1937.

do gain the impression from occasional reading of monographs and historical journals that the time has arrived when one may investigate almost anything, and so long as it relates to the past, the results may be fairly defined as history. Events and conditions that fifty years ago were considered unworthy of so much as five minutes' attention from a reputable historian are now the subjects of laborious and intensive research by scholars of all sorts, from doctoral candidates to distinguished professors emeritus. As a result, there is a growing accumulation of separate studies within a multiplying number of various fields of history. Already, I believe, if only one could wend his way through the labyrinths of bibliography, he would find specialized, impressively footnoted monographs on almost every imaginable subject, as well as on some that are ordinarily conceivable only after considerable effort.

Now, although I appreciate that all of the facts are not available—and never will be—and although I am whole-heartedly in agreement with the broadening interests of history, I do not believe that this present general tendency is suitably directed for the proper exploitation of the facts we are uncovering. The monographs and similar studies tend too much toward specialization, and develop a sort of parochialism within history and the other social sciences. If I may be permitted a metaphor, it seems that history once had but one hand, and insisted that it needed no more since only one thing was worth picking up. Now it has many hands, each reaching for something different, and none of them concerned with what the others are doing. I realize that this comparison is an exaggeration, yet you will agree that there is a good measure of essential truth in it.

Many historians have realized this situation with the result that several attempts have been made at broad historical syntheses. The classroom manuals written by the late James Harvey Robinson were definite efforts to bridge this difficulty. So is the more recent work of Carleton J. H. Hayes. H. G. Wells also tried; and Harry Elmer Barnes has made the latest attempt. Charles and Mary Beard's *Rise of American Civilization* is one of the best efforts of this kind. Regardless of one's admiration



for any of these works, he will have to admit that the process of synthesizing the accumulation of separate bodies of historical data is still very imperfect. I do not subscribe to the cry of "superficial" that is automatically raised by many professional historians every time a synthesis of history is mentioned, but I believe that history has so far failed to discover the principle or method or technique that will permit the successful integration of the separate bits of knowledge concerning the past.

The most penetrating criticism thus far made of attempts at general synthesis is that they ordinarily result in lists and compilations, that whereas the older history gave lists of kings and prime ministers, and wars and treaties, the newer syntheses have simply substituted poets, painters, modes in clothing, and fashions in eating. In this, therefore, there is actually no synthesis, for there is no fusing. It is a mixture, whereas a chemical compound is what is wanted. We do not want first an atom of chlorine and then an atom of sodium; we want the salt that is the result of their chemical union, and that is something entirely different from a mere total of the separate qualities of each.

Assuredly there is no philosophers' stone which will mystically settle the problem for us; yet the most critical minds agree on the present need for something that will fuse a mere accretion of details into a unified, organic whole. There is now a strong compulsion that may ultimately become stark necessity, and I do not believe we can accept a counsel of despair and say it never can be done because it never has been done, and that the complexities which baffle us now must therefore bewilder us eternally. We have more than blind faith to support our optimism, for there are signs that certain important principles of synthesis are being uncovered in some of the social-science fields, and that they can be successfully employed in history.

The most important of these principles is that, in the study of man and society, the whole is more than the sum of all the parts. Once we grasp the implications of this principle and apply them fully, we shall be on the road to a really better understanding of social phenomena. I know of no better way to clarify and emphasize this important point than to quote at some length from

Ruth Benedict's *Patterns of Culture* (Boston and New York, 1934). After a discussion of the extreme diversity of customs and of culture traits among the various tribes and groups and civilizations, Mrs. Benedict turns to the subject of the *integration* of diverse customs and traits within a single culture group. Her penetrating observations have led her to conclude (on pages 46-48) in part that:

The diversity of custom in the world is not . . . a matter which we can only helplessly chronicle. Self-torture here, head-hunting there, prenuptial chastity in one tribe and adolescent license in another, are not a list of unrelated facts, each of them to be greeted with surprise wherever it is found or wherever it is absent. The tabus on killing oneself or another, similarly, though they relate to no absolute standard, are not therefore fortuitous. The significance of cultural behaviour is not exhausted when we have clearly understood that it is local and man-made and hugely variable. It tends also to be integrated. A culture, like an individual, is a more or less consistent pattern of thought and action. Within each culture there come into being characteristic purposes not necessarily shared by other types of society. In obedience to these purposes, each people further and further consolidates its experience, and in proportion to the urgency of these drives the heterogeneous items of behaviour take more and more congruous shape. Taken up by a well-integrated culture, the most ill-assorted acts become characteristic of its peculiar goals, often by the most unlikely metamorphoses. The form that these acts take we can understand only by understanding first the emotional and intellectual mainsprings of that society.

Such patterning of culture cannot be ignored as if it were an unimportant detail. The whole, as modern science is insisting in many fields, is not merely the sum of all its parts, but the result of a unique arrangement and interrelation of the parts that has brought about a new entity. . . .

Cultures, likewise, are more than the sum of their traits. We may know all about the distribution of a tribe's form of marriage, ritual dances, and puberty initiations, and yet understand nothing of the culture as a whole which has used these elements to its own purpose. This purpose selects from among the possible traits in the surrounding regions those which it can use, and discards those which it cannot. Other traits it recasts into conformity with its demands. The process of course need never be conscious during its whole course, but to overlook it in the study of the patternings of human behaviour is to renounce the possibility of intelligent interpretation.

This integration of culture is not in the least mystical. It is the same process by which a style in art comes into being and persists. Gothic architecture, beginning in what was hardly more than a preference for altitude and light, became, by the operation of some canon of taste that developed within its technique, the unique and homogeneous art of the thirteenth century. It discarded elements that were incongruous, modified others to its purposes, and invented others that accorded with its taste. When we describe the process historically, we inevitably use animistic forms of expression as if there were choice and purpose in the growth

of this great art-form. But this is due to the difficulty in our language-forms. There was no conscious choice, and no purpose. What was at first no more than a slight bias in local forms and techniques expressed itself more and more forcibly, integrated itself in more and more definite standards, and eventuated in Gothic art.

What has happened in the great art-styles happens also in cultures as a whole. All the miscellaneous behaviour directed toward getting a living, mating, warring, and worshipping the gods, is made over into consistent patterns in accordance with unconscious canons of choice that develop within the culture. Some cultures, like some periods of art, fail of such integration, and about many others we know too little to understand the motives that actuate them. But cultures at every level of complexity, even the simplest, have achieved it. Such cultures are more or less successful attainments of integrated behaviour, and the marvel is that there can be so many of these possible configurations.

The moral of these generalizations appears to be that the way to better synthesis and understanding is in the direction of efforts to discover cultural *patterns*. By critical and comparative examination of the various traits and aspects of a culture or a society, we may be able to discover its pattern, its essence—that quality which makes the whole something entirely different from the mere sum of its parts. There is no reason why this can not be done and yet retain the chronological approach which is the very essence of history.

One very ambitious attempt has been made in this direction, namely, Oswald Spengler's *Decline of the West*. A fundamental flaw in the method of this work, which historians generally overlooked, however hostile they might otherwise have been, yet which anthropologists quickly noted, was that Spengler employed a geographical concept of cultural units in societies where cultural differences are more stratified by classes than they are distributed geographically. One can validly treat the culture of a very simple society as a unit, but within highly complex societies, such as the one in which we live, no greater mistake can be made than to lump all classes together in a single, simple unit. Surely there are numerous important traits of American culture more or less characteristic of every segment of the Nation; yet I believe that it is beyond question that the banking and business element of America has many more cultural traits in common with the corresponding class in Portugal, Argentina, South Africa, or

Singapore than it has, for instance, with Louisiana share-croppers, Youngstown steel workers, or the corn-hog farmers of Iowa and Illinois.

This actuality indicates quite clearly that there is a distinct place and a definite need for historical study of cultural patterns in each of the various fields of history, and in none does it appear more feasible, or of greater possible value, than in agricultural history.

From time immemorial farmers have been credited with a culture quite distinct from that of city people. Whether or not everything that has been said along this line is true, the fact remains that there have always been very great differences between the life of the country and that of the town. Throughout the course of history, farmers as a rule have been more independent economically than townspeople, have had to provide by their own hands and skill a greater proportion of their own needs, have relied less on others, and have been in closer contact with the natural world of rain, wind, and sun, and of growing plants and animals. Because of these things it has been assumed that farmers are different in character, ideals, and customs from those who live in an urban environment. For this reason farming has been, and still is, frequently called not just an economic enterprise, but a way of life. Innumerable generalizations have been built upon a sort of instinctive perception of these things. Very imperfectly and even unconsciously, these reflections are, in part, a groping effort to grasp the cultural pattern of farm life.

Unfortunately, however, this sort of analysis and generalization has usually been left to persons whose supply of information was not wholly adequate to the task. Those best equipped with factual knowledge have been unwilling to try, and disdainful of the efforts of those who did. Now we must hope that these well-informed historians will begin to emerge from their cubbyholes of facts, overcome their phobia for philosophy, ride down their nervous fear of making mistakes, and strike out on new paths of bold and imaginative purposefulness. Only in this way can we discover the pattern of rural culture, and identify the "emotional and intellectual mainsprings" which must be understood if we are

to understand the nature and evolution of agricultural development. It is not enough merely to extend the field of investigation into the realm of social and intellectual history. We must also have careful, scholarly coordination, inspired by an imagination that is philosophical in purpose yet as detached as our human frailties will permit.

Within a rural cultural unit we need generalized consideration of all the myriad phases of social life,—methods of cultivation, economic processes, tenure systems, political predilections and developments, religious institutions, marital customs, educational systems, customs of recreations, forms of speech, the various proprieties, ideas about morals, the common attitudes toward all these matters, the degrees of tolerance or intolerance toward novelty, and other matters too numerous to list here. Each of these must be considered in the light of all the others, and all must be considered together. Always we must be vigilant to discover common qualities that invest all or most of them. We must compare the whole of this culture at one epoch with the whole culture at a different epoch, and measure and analyze the changes. Keen chronological analysis of such changes should teach us much.

It may be assumed at the outset that there is no universal rural pattern in American agricultural history. There have been obvious variations, both regional and chronological. The five major groupings suggested at various times constitute differing cultures. They are the farm of colonial New England, the Southern colonial plantation, the pioneer farm, the Middle Western big-square-house farm common until about 1890 or 1900, and the more highly mechanized and commercialized farm that has since developed. This grouping is surely neither accurate nor complete, but the essential point is that there certainly have been various and evolving farm-culture groups in this country, and there is reason to believe that still others are emerging. They are extremely important, but at present we can do no better than make intelligent guesses concerning them.

These problems involve cultures separated more in time than in space, and *historical* explanation is essential to understanding.

They are properly a primary concern of agricultural history, and their solution demands greater attention than has been given in the past to the social, philosophical, emotional, and intellectual aspects of farm life. Above all, this broadening scope of investigation must be undertaken with the constant awareness that understanding can not be attained by a mere accumulation of details, and that the ultimate end is to identify the configuration in which and for which the individual items exist.

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## AGRARIAN INDIVIDUALISM IN THE SOVIET UNION: ITS RISE AND DECLINE

### PART I

In the agrarian development of Soviet Russia there are clearly discernible two large and sharply contrasting stages: the first, which lasted from the revolution of 1917 until the beginning of mass collectivization in 1929 and was characterized by the supremacy of small individual peasant farming; and the present collectivist stage which began in 1929. This article deals with the first or individualistic period which is now a closed chapter of Soviet agrarian history. It began with the victory of the Russian peasant in his long contest with the landlord; it ended in a major defeat of peasant individualism by a socialist state bent on the rapid industrialization of the country.

#### PEASANT VERSUS LANDLORD IN THE PRE-REVOLUTIONARY PERIOD

The peasant cultivator was a highly important figure in Russian economy long before the revolution of 1917, and it is no exaggeration to say that the question of the status of the peasantry in Russia transcended in importance all other economic problems.<sup>1</sup> Its crucial aspect was the struggle between the peasants and landlords for the land. This conflict has a long history, but its modern and last phase began with the emancipation of the peasants from serfdom in the middle of the nineteenth century and ended with the agrarian revolution of 1917.

<sup>1</sup> The Russian literature on the subject is voluminous, and several works in the English language have appeared in recent years. G. T. Robinson's *Rural Russia under the Old Régime* (New York, 1932) is an excellent study and contains an extensive bibliography. A useful summary of pre-war agrarian relations, particularly on the statistical side, is available in V. P. Timoshenko, *Agricultural Russia and the Wheat Problem* (Stanford University, 1932). Another work by a former Russian official is George Pavlovsky, *Agricultural Russia on the Eve of the Revolution* (London, 1930), and an interesting earlier work, written from a Marxian standpoint is I. A. Hourwich, *The Economics of the Russian Village* (New York, 1892).



That conditions under which the long-awaited emancipation from serfdom took place brought a considerable measure of disillusionment to the peasants is evidenced by the numerous mutinies with which the "new freedom" was greeted. The emancipation reform, strongly influenced as it was by the interests of the landed gentry, deprived a large group of peasants of part of the land which they had possessed as serfs. No land was allotted to certain groups, and the peasants were burdened with heavy redemption payments often exceeding the current market value for land actually distributed. The peasant was not made an individual land-proprietor nor a completely free citizen. Instead the Government retained and strengthened, for fiscal and social reasons, the system of communal land-tenure with periodic redistribution and equalization of land holdings that existed over a great part of Russia prior to the emancipation.<sup>2</sup> This system was linked with collective responsibility for the burdensome redemption payments and involved considerable administrative and fiscal tutelage over the individual. It seriously hindered the peasants from leaving the village, but it also precluded the development of that sense of private property which goes with individual ownership of land. The commune tended to maintain in the minds of the peasants the idea of equal land-distribution and served as an excellent training school for collective action. Thus the communal system seemed admirably designed to prepare the peasants for agrarian revolution.

The character of the emancipation reform greatly contributed to the economic crisis which afflicted the peasantry during the

<sup>2</sup> It was a system of common land ownership and equalization of holdings but not of common farming. Each peasant family, in addition to the farmstead which it owned in the village, was allotted by the commune a holding consisting of a number of scattered strips intermingled with those of other members of the commune, and it also had certain rights in meadows and pastures. The right to the holding did not extend beyond the next redistribution of land. Most communes redistributed their land periodically, but some only at irregular intervals or partially, and there were communes which did not use the power of redistribution at all. The open-field, scattered, and intermingled strip system led to common crop rotation and the use of stubble for pasture. This was also true in the western provinces of European Russia where land tenure was hereditary but the open-field system nevertheless prevailed.

last decades of the nineteenth century. The peasants were unable to turn to more intensive farming as a way out of the crisis, either because of inadequate markets, shortage of capital, and lack of knowledge of improved methods, or a combination of all these factors. Colonization as a means of rural relief was discouraged by the Government during the immediate post-emancipation period because of the fear of depriving the landowners of a cheap labor supply. Although this action did not prevent spontaneous immigration into new sparsely settled regions of the country, large-scale colonization with government assistance did not begin until the end of the nineteenth century.

Under such conditions the peasants naturally looked with covetous eyes upon the estate land, in the division of which they saw the immediate means of alleviating their distress. The widespread practice of leasing estate land, often under rack-rent conditions, to which the peasants resorted when their holdings proved insufficient, only served to strengthen this frame of mind. Undoubtedly their historic memories also harbored many grievances against the landowners. Serfdom as it developed in Russia implied not only bondage to the land but a correlative duty of the landowners to serve the state. By the middle of the eighteenth century, however, the landowners were "emancipated" from state service, whereas the peasants sank to a condition of personal servitude which differed little from slavery. Moreover, it was during this relatively late period that a large number of peasants, formerly subject only to the state, were bound, together with their land, to court favorites and others by imperial grants. During the century preceding emancipation, the landowners, free from service to the state, turned more and more from rent collectors into gentleman farmers, exploiting the labor of their serfs, who formerly tilled the land for themselves and merely paid dues to the landowners or the state. Under such conditions, it is not surprising that the peasants did not regard the right of the gentry to the land as sacrosanct. What must have especially rankled as an injustice was the diminution of the peasant land area that accompanied emancipation. Thus there was a historical and psychological as well as an economic basis for

the attitude of the peasants toward estate land. Any hope, however, on their part for a new general supplementary distribution of land was blocked by a resolutely adverse policy of the Government, dedicated to the task of safeguarding the interests of the landed gentry.

In the contest between peasant and landlord, Russian socialists of all factions were unanimously on the side of the former and against the latter. However, the two currents of Russian socialism had a marked difference of attitude towards peasant farming. The older Russian socialists, the so-called narodniki or populists, were agrarian and peasantophile in their outlook and sympathies, and the Russian peasant commune, which they regarded as a germ for socialist development, was the alpha and omega of their philosophy. Whatever their ultimate ideal, they accepted the egalitarian principle of land distribution as it was practiced by the peasant commune and were consequently favorable to small-scale peasant farming.

At the opposite pole was the younger school of Russian socialism, the Marxists, who accepted and applied to Russian conditions the orthodox Marxian dogma, root and branch. Since the Bolsheviks are wedded to the Marxian philosophy, it is in the latter that the ideological roots of the Soviet agrarian policy must largely be sought. The Marxian teaching on the peasant question acquires, therefore, special significance. Its main thesis is the "doom of the peasant" as an independent producer in the course of the evolution of modern capitalistic society.<sup>3</sup> The familiar Marxist scheme insists on the superiority of large-scale methods of production in agriculture as well as in the manufacturing industry and considers both subject to the same evolutionary law of concentration which predicts the disappearance of small, independent enterprises and the eventual division of society into a small capitalist class arrayed against a large propertyless proletariat.

Lenin, the father of Bolshevism, took an active part in the

<sup>3</sup> See the stimulating essay by D. Mitrany, "Marx v. the Peasant," *London Essays in Economics: In Honour of Edwin Cannan*, edited by T. E. Gregory and Hugh Dalton, 336 (London, 1927).

lively controversy between the Marxists and narodniki. As early as 1901, he succinctly stated the Marxian position with respect to the peasant:<sup>4</sup>

To attempt to save the peasantry, to protect small farmers and small property-owners from the onslaught of capitalism would mean a useless hindrance to social development and a fooling of the peasants by the illusion of a possibility of prosperity under capitalism.

In 1917, after the overthrow of the Czarist Government but prior to the Bolshevik revolution, Lenin, addressing a congress of peasant representatives, reiterated this thesis which, in his mind, acquired special significance as a result of the destruction of the World War:<sup>5</sup>

If we shall continue as in the past with small peasant holdings, even though as free citizens and on free [from the landowners] land, we are, nevertheless, threatened by inevitable ruin because the collapse is approaching with every day, with every hour.

This theoretical antagonism, however, was early tempered by considerations of practical politics.<sup>6</sup> The smouldering agrarian unrest finally flared up in the early years of the present century in agrarian disturbances which culminated in a serious peasant movement during the revolution of 1905-06, when the fate of the Czarist régime hung in the balance. Lenin was quick to perceive the opportunity for an alliance of the revolutionary workers with the peasantry in the struggle against Russian absolutism supported by the landowning gentry. Therefore, early in the revolution of 1905 he formulated the Party line as follows:<sup>7</sup>

The duty of the rural proletariat and its ideologist the social democrat is to act together with the peasant bourgeoisie against all elements of the feudal system and the feudal landlords; but likewise to act together with the urban proletariat against the peasant and every other bourgeoisie.

<sup>4</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Works*, 4:102. All references to Lenin's works are to the Russian third edition (Moscow, 1926-1933).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 20:417.

<sup>6</sup> For the official attitude of the Bolshevik Party, see *Vsesoiuznaia Kommunisticheskaia Partia (b) v Rezoliutsiiakh i Resheniakh S'ezdov* . . . [All-Union Communist Party in Resolutions and Decisions of Congresses, Conferences and Plenary Sessions of the Central Committee, 1898-1933], Part 1-2 (1932-1933).

<sup>7</sup> Lenin, *Works*, 7:160.

A few days later, he returned to the same theme:<sup>8</sup>

The party of the proletariat must support the peasant uprising. It will never defend the present estate system from the revolutionary onslaught of the peasants; but, at the same time, it will always strive to develop class struggle in the village.

According to Lenin, the victory of the peasants over the landowners would result in a new struggle rather than harmony. He early envisaged two stages in the agrarian revolution: a "democratic" stage, in which the socialists would support the demand of all peasants for land; and a "socialist" stage in which a class struggle on a classical Marxist pattern would take place in the village. Lenin saw clearly that the alliance with the peasantry against landowners which he advocated was bound to be a temporary marriage of convenience ending in divorce and hostility, and the course of events shows how prophetic was this appraisal when the revolution of 1917-18 provided an actual test.

#### THE INTERLUDE

The agrarian revolution of 1905-06 was suppressed by the Czarist Government, and the estates were saved from doom for another decade. The landowners, however, did not feel safe any longer, and, for a price, they were willing to part with the land, whose expropriation by the state was demanded by radical parties during the revolution. They had voluntarily begun to dispose of their land soon after the emancipation reform in the middle of the nineteenth century, but the process was greatly accelerated after 1905. During the forty years prior to 1905, the peasants bought about 43,000,000 acres from the estate owners, and during the following decade they acquired over 25,000,000 acres.<sup>9</sup> As a result, on the eve of the revolution the peasants owned approximately two-thirds of all land that was not in the possession of the state.<sup>10</sup> When the land leased by the peasants is added to what

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

<sup>9</sup> See A. N. Chelintsev, [The Estate Farming in Russia Before the Revolution], *Zapiski Instituta Izucheniia Rossii*, 1:9-14 (Prague, 1925).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* The state lands were principally located in the northern provinces and did not possess agricultural significance; such state land as was useful for farming was, for the most part, leased by the peasants.



they owned, their share of the total land in farms was even larger and according to some estimates exceeded 70 percent.<sup>11</sup> When measured by the crop acreage the importance of peasant farming was still greater. It accounted, according to the Census of 1916, for nearly 90 percent of the total, with regional variations from practically 100 percent in Siberia to about 75 percent in the Baltic and southwestern provinces where the German and Polish elements greatly predominated among the landowners and estate farming was more stable.<sup>12</sup> Thus Russia was becoming increasingly a country of small peasant farming, but at a great price. According to the estimates of one authority, the annual payments of the peasants for land purchased and leased reached 615,000,000 gold rubles, or over \$330,000,000, which constituted approximately 13 percent of their gross income.<sup>13</sup>

The years separating the revolutions of 1905 and 1917 also witnessed certain important agrarian reforms which marked a very significant shift in policy on the part of the Imperial Government. Following the emancipation of peasants, and particularly during the last two decades of the nineteenth century, the Government was doing its utmost to safeguard and strengthen the peasant commune, but after the revolution of 1905, the dissolution of the commune and individualization of peasant landownership became the leading objectives of agrarian policy. This change was due, in part, to the fact that the commune's fiscal function of collective responsibility for taxes and redemption payments for land was brought to an end by special legislation and by cancellation of the redemption debt after 1906. It was also believed that the abolition of communal land tenure would facilitate the enclosure of open-field scattered-strip holdings—a highly desirable reform. However, the decisive consideration was the Government's disappointment with the commune on

<sup>11</sup> N. P. Oganovskii, *Ocherki po Ekonomicheskoi Geografii Rossii* [Outline of the Economic Geography of Russia], 1:77-80 (Moscow, 1922). A considerable proportion of the remaining estate land was in forest.

<sup>12</sup> A similar census before the war probably would have shown a somewhat smaller proportion for the peasant acreage since the sowings on estate farms were decreased during the war to a greater extent than on peasant farms.

<sup>13</sup> Oganovskii, *Ocherki po Ekonomicheskoi Geografii Rossii*, 81-82.

social and political grounds. For a long time, the official hope was that this system of land tenure with equalization of peasant holdings, by preventing the formation of a landless proletariat, would save Russia from social unrest. The revolution of 1905 blasted these expectations, and the Government, therefore, pinned its hopes on the economically stronger elements of the peasantry in the belief that by encouraging the development of a class of capitalistic peasant farmers, it would create a barrier to the spread of revolutionary ideas in the village.

As the result of the application of the so-called Stolypin Laws, named after the Prime Minister P. A. Stolypin, their principal sponsor, over half of the peasant households in European Russia owned their allotments under individual, hereditary tenure by 1916. In 1905 less than a fourth of the peasant households in European Russia had hereditary allotments and the holdings of the rest, with the exception of the farmstead, depended on the action of the communes, most of which redistributed their land periodically, others at irregular intervals or only partially, and some not at all.<sup>14</sup>

Nevertheless, as Professor Robinson has pointed out, "the land interests of the peasants were still interlocked," even under the individual tenure, due to the prevailing intermingled strip system in the case of the arable land, which made for common crop rotation as did also the use of the stubble for pasture.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, common tenure in meadows and natural pasture land as a rule was retained. It was only when physical consolidation or enclosure of the scattered strips was effected—and especially when the farmstead was removed to the enclosed holding, called a *khutor*, which is the nearest approximation to an American farm, that a significant individualization of Russian peasant agriculture was achieved. Moreover, only physical consolidation really mattered from the standpoint of the technical progress of agricul-

<sup>14</sup> This is apart from the land purchased by the peasants individually after the emancipation. Such "privately owned" land in the full sense of the term was in an entirely different legal category from the peasant "allotted" land which, prior to 1906, could not be mortgaged or sold and was subject to certain restrictions even under the new Stolypin legislation.

<sup>15</sup> Robinson, *Rural Russia*, 218.



ture. Such consolidation was in fact the goal of official policy, and on the eve of the revolution of 1917, consolidated holdings of one type or another comprised about 10 percent of the peasant holdings in European Russia with an area of over 34,000,000 acres of peasant "allotted" land and over 43,000,000 acres when the purchased land was included.<sup>16</sup>

Another serious, if less spectacular, break with tradition was the provision of the new legislation that, under individual hereditary tenure, the holding was no longer the property of the entire household, as formerly, but, with some exceptions, belonged exclusively to the head of the household. Thus the new individualism of the Tsarist agrarian policy attacked in the same sweep the communal and the collective household systems of land tenure.

A number of other steps looking toward the solution of the agrarian problem were taken by the Government during the decade between the revolution of 1905 and the World War. Financial aid was extended to the peasants for the purchase of land through a special peasant bank, which fostered purchases by peasants individually instead of collective acquisition by whole communes or associations, as was the vogue prior to 1905. Rural migration from regions of dense population to sparsely settled areas was actively encouraged. Administrative tutelage over the peasants was considerably reduced. It is well to remember, however, that the Government's approach to agrarian reform was, in the famous words of Stolypin, that of "a wager on the strong and the sober"; or, in other words, the Imperial Government was determined to create a class of strong, independent peasant-proprietors as a bulwark against revolution and was little concerned with the lot of the poorer strata of Russian peasantry or with the friction which its reforms were producing in the village. What might have been the ultimate effect of these reforms and of the rapid industrialization of the country on the Russian agrarian problem if the World War had not intervened, is an interesting question but a purely academic one. The

<sup>16</sup> P. N. Pershin, *Uchastkovoe Zemlepolzovanie v. Rossii* . . . [Enclosed Holdings in Russia], 8 (Moscow, 1922).

collapse of the old régime after two and a half years of exhaustive war brought in its train an agrarian revolution for the second time in a little over a decade.

#### THE AGRARIAN REVOLUTION AND EARLY SOVIET LEGISLATION

The agrarian revolution preceded the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks in the autumn of 1917. The peasant movement against the landlords and their properties after the overthrow of the Czarist régime in the early spring of 1917 was at first slow in gathering momentum.<sup>17</sup> By the early summer, however, it spread over most of European Russia, concentrating especially in the regions of central Russia and in the Volga basin. After a recession in the latter part of the summer, it became more violent in the autumn.

The war created a new and serious problem for rural Russia—a shortage of labor in the face of the urgent need of maintaining agricultural production. Hence, not only land but allotment of prisoners of war to work on the farm became a bone of contention between the peasants and the landlords. With the deterioration of their farm equipment, the peasants cast covetous eyes on the superior, and often not fully utilized, implements and work animals of the landlords.<sup>18</sup> Overshadowing all these grievances, however, was the old crucial clamor for land.

Although even the liberal bourgeois parties insisted on a fairly radical solution of the land question during the revolution of 1905, the Provisional Government of 1917 adopted dilatory tactics in dealing with the agrarian problem. It postponed meeting the demands of the peasants for land until the convocation of a constituent assembly to work out a new constitution, resorting in the meantime to a few minor steps, such as the prohibition of all land sales in order to avoid land speculation, pending new legislation. Its main action, however, was to set up an elaborate

<sup>17</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the peasant movement of 1917, see S. Dubrowski, *Die Bauernbewegung in der Russischen Revolution 1917* (Berlin, 1929); W. H. Chamberlin, *The Russian Revolution, 1917-1921*, 1:242-259 (New York, 1935).

<sup>18</sup> Victor Chernov, *The Great Russian Revolution . . .* translated and abridged by P. E. Mosely, 149-151 (New Haven, 1936).

organization to study the agrarian question. At this stage, the peasant unrest could not be canalized by such methods, however rational they may have seemed to their authors; and the Provisional Government, unlike its predecessor, lacked force to quell disturbances. Finally, as the revolt became more and more serious in the autumn of 1917, even the Kerensky Cabinet began to discuss a program of new agrarian legislation, introduced by the Minister of Agriculture, S. L. Maslov, but it was too late. The new agrarian law was destined to be written by Lenin and his friends.

Lenin's strategy at this point was consistent with the course which he had charted during the revolution of 1905. It may be characterized as playing up to the peasants in a bid to gain political power for the Bolsheviks. "The peasants want to retain small farming, distribute the land on an equal basis and periodically equalize the holdings," wrote Lenin two months before the October Revolution, and he, the critic of small-scale farming, added: "Let them. Just on account of this, no sensible socialist will break with the poor peasants."<sup>19</sup>

One of the first acts of the Bolsheviks on seizing the reins of government was the promulgation of the celebrated decree, "Concerning the Land," on November 8 (October 26) 1917, which henceforth will be referred to as the Land Decree.<sup>20</sup> It provided for the immediate abolition of the property rights of landlords without any compensation and the confiscation of all estates which were to be administered by the local land committees and the district soviets of peasant deputies, pending the

<sup>19</sup> Lenin, *Works*, 21:112.

<sup>20</sup> According to V. Miliutin, the first Soviet Commissar of Agriculture, he and Larin prepared the original draft of the Land Decree but the final formulation belonged to Lenin. See V. Miliutin, *Agrarnaia Politika SSSR* [The Agrarian Policy of the U.S.S.R.], 57 (ed. 3. Moscow, 1929). For the texts of the Land Decree and other early Soviet agrarian laws, see *Sbornik Dekretov i Postanovlenii po Narodnomu Komissariatu Zemledeliia, 1917-1920 g.g., 1921* [Collection of Decrees and Regulations Dealing with the Peoples' Commissariat of Agriculture, 1917-1920]. For English translations of many of these laws, see James Bunyan and H. H. Fisher, *The Bolshevik Revolution 1917-1918; Documents and Materials* (Stanford University, 1934); James Bunyan, *Intervention, Civil War and Communism in Russia, April-December 1918; Documents and Materials* (Baltimore, 1936).

final solution of the land problem by the Constituent Assembly. In addition, the decree embodied a summary of instructions to the peasant representatives in a Congress of Peasant Soviets held in the summer of 1917. The main points of this document were: private property in land was to be abolished with the consequent prohibition of the selling, leasing, and mortgaging of land; the land was to become the possession of all the people to be used by those who tilled it; all land was to be turned into a general national reserve administered by the local self-governing bodies, with the exception of land of special character, such as orchards, nurseries, etc., which was to be national or communal property. From this reserve every citizen who wished to engage in farming was entitled to an allotment but only on condition that he cultivate the land himself and employ no hired labor. The allotments were to be equalized on the basis of a labor or consumption standard or norm, with periodic redistribution depending on the growth of population and the increased productivity of agriculture. The form of land tenure was to depend entirely on the decision of the peasants themselves.

This was in fact the so-called "socialization" program of the Socialist Revolutionaries, the most important narodniki or populist, non-Marxian socialist party.<sup>21</sup> It reproduced largely the system of equal land-distribution and small-scale individual farming practiced by the Russian peasants under the communal land tenure rather than any scheme of genuine collective agriculture. To the taunts that the Bolsheviks had adopted the agrarian program of their opponents, the Socialist Revolutionaries, Lenin immediately retorted in a famous speech introducing the Land Decree that the question of the authorship of the new law was immaterial. The essential thing was the aspirations of the peasantry itself, which every democratic government had

<sup>21</sup> The Socialist Revolutionary Party had split into right and left wings during the summer of 1917. While the right wing was part of the Kerensky coalition, the left wing supported the Bolsheviks and soon after the October revolution joined the Soviet Government in which one of its representatives, A. Kolegaev, received the portfolio of the Commissar (Minister) of Agriculture. Until the break between the Bolsheviks and the Socialist Revolutionaries in the summer of 1918, the ideas of the latter dominated Soviet agrarian legislation.

to respect. The peasants should have a firm assurance that there would be no more landlords in the village and that they would be able to order their lives in their own way. "We must follow life itself, we must give complete carte blanche to the peasants to proceed with the agrarian revolution along their own lines."<sup>22</sup>

On February 19 (6), 1918, only a few months after the issue of the first Land Decree, a new comprehensive agrarian law entitled "A Decree Concerning Socialization of Land" was proclaimed by the Soviet Government. This law was fundamentally a reiteration of the socialization program of the first Land Decree with this difference, that a mandate was also given to the Government to facilitate the development of collective farming at the expense of individualistic farming "for the purpose of transition to a socialist economy" (article 11-d). Preferential treatment in land allotment was to be given to various types of collective and cooperative farming (articles 22 and 35).

While the Socialization Law appears to justify the characterization of having a "double soul," individualist and socialist,<sup>23</sup> nevertheless, its main emphasis was on the securing of equitable distribution of land among individual small peasant-farmers rather than collectivizing agriculture. With this end in view, the Socialization Law included an elaborate scheme for a nationwide distribution of land which it envisaged as a gradual long-range process; while a "Temporary Instruction" which ordered a division of the confiscated land on a local scale without reference to the complicated plans of national distribution was issued to deal with the immediate situation, thus leaving the task to the discretion of local authorities.<sup>24</sup> Actually, the division of land was carried out by the peasants themselves with little official direction or control. They used the time-honored methods of land distribution of the Russian peasant commune, as can be

<sup>22</sup> Lenin, *Works*, 22:23.

<sup>23</sup> Soviet Commissar of Agriculture, S. P. Sereda, quoted by I. I. Evitikhiev, *Zemelnoe Pravo* [Land Law], 82 (Moscow, 1923).

<sup>24</sup> D. S. Rosenblum, *Zemelnoe Pravo R.S.F.S.R.* [Land Law of R.S.F.S.R.], 51-53 (ed. 2. Moscow, 1928).



seen from the following more or less typical account of the process in one of the districts in Central Russia.

The distribution of land took place under the conditions of local self-determination and was guided only by the old experience of the distributive land commune. The peasants literally themselves distributed the confiscated land between small administrative units (Volost) in the district, between villages in the Volost and individual households in a village. They distributed equally—arithmetically as well as they knew how in accordance with such suggestions as they could derive from the old distributive communal experience.<sup>25</sup>

Thus did the peasant commune acquit itself during the first stage of the agrarian revolution, confirming the worst fears of its conservative critics.

The peasants divided among themselves not only the estate land but whatever other property they could lay their hands on. "Everything was divided, including the piano. . . . Large buildings which could not be divided were left without frames, doors and stoves."<sup>26</sup> This description of the course of the agrarian revolution in one province epitomizes the general situation.

The agrarian revolution, however, did not stop with the division of estates. The larger peasant holdings were also subjected to a downward levelling process. This is shown by a comparison of sample censuses for 1917 and 1919, giving the distribution of peasant households according to acreage sown.<sup>27</sup>

It will be observed that there was a considerable reduction at both extremes: the landless proletariat and the larger peasant holdings. The number of middle-sized holdings (11–22 acres) also decreased, but less proportionally. On the other hand, the number of holdings not exceeding 11 acres, which constituted even before the revolution nearly 60 percent of the total, increased

<sup>25</sup> V. Keller and I. Romanenko, *First Results of the Agrarian Reform*, 7 (Voronezh, 1922), quoted by Rosenblum, *Zemelnoe Pravo*, 54, and V. Chernov, "'Chernyi Peredel' 1918 g.," *Zapiski Instituta Izucheniia Rossii*, 2:91 (Prague, 1925). Consult the latter for other evidence of a similar character.

<sup>26</sup> I. A. Kirilov, *Ocherki Zemleustroistva Za Tri Goda Revoliutsii* [Essays in Land Organization during the Three Years of Revolution, 1918–1920], 58 (Petrograd, 1922).

<sup>27</sup> A. Khriashcheva, [The Peasantry during the War and Revolution], *Vestnik Statistiki*, 9–12:36 (September–December 1920); A. V. Peshekhonov, [Dynamics of the Peasantry during the Period of Revolution], *Zapiski Instituta Izucheniia Rossii*, 2:3–48 (Prague, 1925).

to 74 percent in 1919. It was equalization on a low level.<sup>28</sup> Similar results appear when the peasant holdings are classified according to the number of livestock, but the degree of equalization was considerably less. Although the data are lacking in the case of implements, their distribution was probably still less equalized.<sup>29</sup>

PEASANT HOUSEHOLDS ACCORDING TO ACRES SOWN	PERCENT IN 1917	PERCENT IN 1919
None	11.4	6.5
11.0 and under	59.1	74.0
11.1-21.9	21.6	16.4
22 and over	7.9	3.1
Total . . . . .	100.0	100.0

By the summer of 1918, the agrarian revolution, insofar as the estates were concerned, was complete. The landlords were driven out from the "noble's nests" and the peasants obtained practically all the available agricultural land. In the vast majority of cases, however, the individual peasant gained only an insignificant amount of additional land. According to an official investigation, the per capita increase of acreage as the result of the agrarian revolution did not exceed half a dessiatine in a large number of provinces and only in a few did it reach a whole dessiatine (2.7 acres).<sup>30</sup>

This result is not surprising in view of the continuous encroachment of peasant agriculture on the estates mentioned previously.

<sup>28</sup> Considerable inequality between holdings in different regions and districts remained, due to the intensely local character of land distribution which embraced primarily the available acreage and existing agricultural population of small districts with no transfer of population from sections with relatively dense to those with scarce population.

<sup>29</sup> L. N. Kritsman, *Proletarskaia Revoliutsiia i Derevnia* [Proletarian Revolution and the Village], 132 (Moscow, 1929). As this volume indicates, the disparity between the division of land and the implements and livestock contained the seed of future economic stratification of the village.

<sup>30</sup> B. Knipovich, in a collection of essays by various writers, entitled *O. Zemle* [Concerning the Land], 1:29 (Petrograd, 1921). In this connection it should be noted that relief from payment for the land formerly leased or purchased from the landlords would have constituted a substantial gain, if it were not more than offset during the years of revolution and civil war by the burden of requisitions.



Nevertheless, the disappearance of the larger properties with their higher yields and the extreme subdivision of Russian farming, aggravated by the revival of the inefficient scattered-strip system, contributed much to the weakening of the economic efficiency of Russian agriculture which was low even before the revolution. Politically, however, distribution of land proved a success, for, by appeasing the peasant, it greatly helped in consolidating the power of the Soviet Government. However, the harmonious relations between the Government and the peasants did not last long; as Lenin prophesied, a new struggle soon began in the village.

#### WAR COMMUNISM

The cause of this conflict with the peasants was the extremely critical state of the food supply. The situation became difficult even before 1917, and the shortage of bread in Petrograd played a prominent part in the outbreak of the revolution. To cope with the grain crisis, the Provisional Government established a state grain monopoly in March 1917. It was not, however, carried out effectively, and perhaps it could not have been under the circumstances. The crisis, therefore, grew more and more serious with the general economic dislocation and the breakdown of railroad transportation, especially after the October revolution. The peasants had no incentive to deliver grain to the Government at fixed prices under conditions of a rapidly depreciating currency and acute shortage of manufactured goods, especially in view of the opportunity to sell it at much higher prices on the private market, which, however much disorganized or legally proscribed, was never entirely extinguished. The situation was tremendously aggravated in 1918 by the loss of the principal grain surplus-producing regions, first in the south and later in the east, as a result of foreign occupation and civil war.<sup>31</sup> The "bony hand of hunger" gripped the new Soviet state.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> See V. Melnik, [Requisitions Prior to Their Legalization], *Problemy Ekonomiki*, 6:104-115 (1935).

<sup>32</sup> Lenin, *Works*, 23:525; N. Orlov, *Prodovolstvennaia Rabota Sovetskoi Vlasti* [Food Supply Activities of the Soviet Government], 315 (Moscow, 1918).

To cope with the famine the Government decided in May 1918 to adopt heroic measures. The first objective was to obtain grain from peasants who had a surplus and were unwilling to part with it. A series of decrees with this end in view were issued during the summer of 1918, beginning with the Decree of May 9 (published on May 13) entitled "A Decree Concerning Special Authority Vested in the Peoples Commissariat of Food Supplies for the Struggle Against the Rural Bourgeoisie Dealing and Speculating in Grain."<sup>33</sup> This title foreshadowed the general line taken in the ensuing campaign. It was, according to the official theory, a "struggle" with the rural bourgeoisie—the "Kulaki" or rich peasants—who were accused of holding grain from the hungry masses of poor peasants and city workers in expectation of higher prices. On this indictment was based the official justification for the forceful appropriation of grain. In accordance with the Decree of June 11, the poor peasants were enlisted as allies through the organization of special committees of the poor. In return for the cooperation in grain requisitions, these peasants were to be given a share of the requisitioned grain and supplied on favorable terms with other necessities, as well as agricultural implements for the purpose of "the organization of collective cultivation and harvest."

The Kombedy—the abbreviated title by which these committees are known in Russian—played an outstanding rôle in the class struggle which began in the Russian village.<sup>34</sup> Acting with the Kombedy, and often as their leaders, were factory workers to whom Lenin appealed in the summer of 1918 to organize "a

<sup>33</sup> Collection of Decrees and Regulations Dealing with the People's Commissariat of Agriculture, 1917-1920.

<sup>34</sup> The Kombedy were relatively short-lived. In many instances they arrogated to themselves the functions of the local rural soviets with the resulting overlapping and duplication of authority. The sixth All-Russian Soviet Congress in November 1918 decided to concentrate full power in the hands of the local soviets and do away with the Kombedy. New elections to the Soviets, however, were ordered under the active supervision of the retiring Kombedy, with the exclusion of the Kulaki, which insured the control of the same elements over the new soviets. See V. Averiev, [Committees of the Poor], *Na Agrarnom Fronte*, 3:52-72 (March 1930), and the article by the same author in *Selskokhozaistvennaia Entsiklopediia* [Agricultural Encyclopedia], vol. 3; Chamberlin, *Russian Revolution*, 2:43-47.

crusade for bread, a crusade against speculators and Kulaki."<sup>35</sup> As a result, armed detachments of workers were sent to assist in the requisition and harvesting of grain. However, the peasants who possessed the grain did not turn the other cheek and, since there were many demobilized soldiers with arms among them, bloody battles were fought in the Russian countryside.<sup>36</sup> The "struggle for bread," as this campaign came to be known, succeeded in splitting the peasantry into warring factions and developing the class struggle in the village that Lenin had prophesied was to follow the ejection of the landowners.

The Kombedy became one of the major causes of the final break in July 1918 between the Bolsheviks and their allies, the Left Socialist Revolutionaries, who were strenuously opposed to the class struggle in the village. As a result, the Bolsheviks were free to modify the land policy which was previously dominated by the ideology of the Socialist Revolutionaries. Lenin and his colleagues began to stress the inadequacy of the Socialist Revolutionary program of land division and advanced the collectivization of agriculture as a solution. This new tendency was in harmony with the Bolshevik ideology and with the general drift of the Soviet economic policy of the civil war period which went down in history under the general name of War Communism. It was manifested in such measures as nationalization of industry and suppression of private trade but, above all, in the commandeering of grain and other foodstuffs from the peasants, since the food question overshadowed all other economic questions at that time. As Lenin said in July 1918, "Painful hunger forced us towards a purely communistic task."<sup>37</sup> Collectivization was looked upon as a socialist solution of the agricultural and food crisis.<sup>38</sup> In this connection, Lenin argued that it was impossible to supply numerous individual peasant farmers with the imple-

<sup>35</sup> Lenin, *Works*, 23:58.

<sup>36</sup> D. N. Kondratiev, *Rynok Khlebov . . .* [The Grain Market and Its Regulation during the War and Revolution], 124 (Moscow, 1922).

<sup>37</sup> Lenin, *Works*, 23:54.

<sup>38</sup> See Kirilov, *Ocherki Zemleustroistva*, 149.

ments, livestock, etc., needed for efficient farming; and even if it were possible, it would be extremely irrational and wasteful. "Only with the help of common, cooperative labor is it possible to escape from the impasse into which we were driven by the imperialist war."<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, Lenin held that it was only through a practical demonstration of the superiority of the "socialized, collective, cooperative farming" that the peasantry could be really won over by the Soviet régime.<sup>40</sup>

The new orientation of the Soviet agrarian policy received its legal expression in another comprehensive land law promulgated on February 14, 1919. This law, entitled "concerning the Socialist Land Organization and Measures for Transition to Socialist Agriculture," ceased using vague expressions characteristic of former legislation,—such as that the land belongs to all the people,—which were supposed to distinguish socialization of land from nationalization. The new law established in unmistakable terms the principle of state ownership of land. It further declared in article 3 that all forms of individualistic farming "must be looked upon as passing and dying out" and that the transition to cooperative forms of farming was necessary. Large Soviet (state) farms, communes, cooperative cultivation of soil and other forms of agricultural cooperation were considered the best means to this end. Notwithstanding some contradictions and ambiguities, the fundamental aim of the new law was clear. It was to replace small-scale peasant farming by state or cooperative types out of which a full-fledged socialist organization of agriculture would develop.

Collectivization of Russian agriculture, however, was still far off. It is true that a number of state farms were organized in the half-ruined estates, and collective farming by workers and peasants was also encouraged by the Government. But these types of farms constituted only a small island in the ocean of individual peasant farming and could not exert a significant effect on the critical condition of Russian agriculture even if they were effi-

<sup>39</sup> Lenin, *Works*, 24:40, 537.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 579.

cient, which was decidedly not the case.<sup>41</sup> Thus, it was not collective or state farms but small individual peasant farmers, operating it is true under a communal system of land tenure, who still formed the backbone of Russian agriculture.<sup>42</sup>

The growing paralysis of industry, the inflation and requisitions which had deprived the producers of a surplus and sometimes even of the necessary food supply continuously since 1918,<sup>43</sup> left no incentive to the peasant to produce beyond his immediate needs. Not only was the supply of manufactured goods available for the village dwindling, but the distribution was such that the poor peasants who had little or nothing to contribute to the state received more of the meager supply of manufactured goods than those from whom the Government obtained grain and other agricultural products.<sup>44</sup> Under such conditions, a catastrophic decline in acreage, livestock numbers, and agricultural production took place. Cash crops like wheat and various industrial crops like cotton, and regions longest subject to the régime of requisitions, were most seriously affected. The decline of the crop area began during the period of the World War, but the reduction was small for the territory of the Soviet Union which was not affected directly by war. It was estimated by a Soviet statistician at

<sup>41</sup> A well-informed, high Soviet official, N. Osinskii, declared, for instance, that the productive effect of collective and state farms "was not far from zero"; quoted in Rosenblum, *Zemelnoe Pravo*, 89. See also A. L. Swiderskii, [Ten Years of Agricultural Policy] *Puti Selskogo Khozaistva*, 10:27-28 (October 1927); [State Land and Its Utilization], *Trudy Gosudarstvennogo Nauchno-Issledovatel'skogo Instituta Zemleustroistva i Pereseleniia*; *Gosudarstvennye Zemelnye Imushchestva i ikh Ispolzovanie* [Publications of the State Research Institute of Land Organization and Colonization], 5:67-72 (Moscow, 1928); I. A. Koniukov, *Kollektivnoe Zemledelie* [Collective Agriculture], 30 (ed. 2. Moscow, 1925).

<sup>42</sup> According to the census of 1920, state and collective farms accounted for a little over 1 percent of the sown area and, although the census data are quite incomplete, they are, nevertheless, sufficiently representative of the position of these socialist types of farming in the Russian agricultural scheme at that time. There was, moreover, evidence of considerable hostility of the local peasant population to the collectives, due in some instances to the efforts of over-zealous local authorities to force peasants into such types of farms. See Lenin, *Works*, 24:539; Kirilov, *Ocherki Zemleustroistva*, 52-60, 185-187.

<sup>43</sup> Lenin, *Works*, 26:332.

<sup>44</sup> Kritsman, *Proletarskaia Revoliutsiia*, 89.



approximately 7 percent between 1914 and 1917. By 1920 the area was roughly estimated at 16 percent and by 1921, 25 percent below 1914. The number of horses decreased between 1916 and 1921 by 17 and cattle by 16 percent. Agricultural production, which was affected by reduced yields as well as decline of acreage, was estimated in 1920-21 at about 30 percent below 1913-14.<sup>45</sup> Russian agriculture was becoming more and more self-sufficient while cities suffered from famine. The crop failure in a number of regions in 1920 aggravated the situation still further.

The growing agricultural crisis of under-production continued to be the dominating national problem at the beginning of 1921, as it had been three years earlier. The Soviet leaders still clung to a collectivist solution but not so much through the gradual development of producers' cooperatives and state farms. Rather it was to take the form of bringing the peasants en masse into a state-controlled agricultural economy, functioning on the basis of a national plan. Although this proposal was approved at the end of 1920 by the VIII Soviet Congress and various measures and regulations for its execution were drawn up in the early months of the following year, it was never put into full operation. In the spring of 1921 an abrupt volte-face of the Government's agricultural policy sounded the death-knell of War Communism and, for the time being, of the associated ideas of collectivized and planned agriculture.

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*(To be continued)*

<sup>45</sup> N. Vishnevskii, [Agriculture of the U.S.S.R. during Ten Years of Revolution], *Na Agrarnom Fronte*, 11-12:127-132 (1927); V. P. Nifontov, *Zhivotnovodstvo SSSR V Tsifrakh* [Livestock of the U.S.S.R. in Figures], 4 (Moscow, 1932). Cf. Timoshenko, *Agricultural Russia and the Wheat Problem*, 150-158.

## THE SABBATICAL YEAR

The recent policy of the United States Government of reducing the acreage under cultivation in order to limit the production of agricultural commodities and thus, by raising prices, restore the buying power which the producer enjoyed in more prosperous times, suggests the ancient Hebrew regulation which systematically took land out of cultivation. In the American instance, production of agricultural commodities was said to be in excess of consumption. To the extent that prices depend upon the relation of demand to supply, they seemed destined to continue at a low level unless production could be controlled. In the ancient practice, the legislation was directed toward making the people economically self-sufficient by avoiding the creation of a capitalist class and by safeguarding the original fertility of the soil.

The Hebrew institution of the seventh year of fallow for land is, from any viewpoint, an ancient regulation. Its place in the *Pentateuch* lends support to the belief that it was part of the legislation intended for the children of Israel upon their entrance into Canaan.<sup>1</sup> Even those who assert that the composite authorship and wide range of time in composition and redaction must be accepted grant that the first reference to the practice is found in the oldest Hebrew documents.<sup>2</sup> Apart from the literary and historical evidence, economic logic also supports the antiquity of the institution. The year of fallow and the practice of periodical redistribution of land is "Almost inexplicable if they be supposed to have originated at a late period of Hebrew history," and "they present no difficulty if we assume them to be the survival of a period through which every agricultural community has at the outset passed."<sup>3</sup> It is reasonably certain that the

<sup>1</sup> *Leviticus*, 25:1-7.

<sup>2</sup> *Exodus*, 23:10-11.

<sup>3</sup> John Fenton, *Early Hebrew Life*, 69-70 (London, 1880).



practice of fallowing land in some systematic way is much older than the Mosaic legislation and that it was not confined to the Hebrews but belonged rather to a stage of agricultural development. However, in the case of the Hebrews greater significance attached to the institution through its linkage to the system of sevens in time: the seventh day of rest for the individual, the seventh week of the calendar year for the Feast of Pentecost, the seventh month for the beginning of the civil year, the seventh year of rest for the land, and the close of the seventh seven of years to usher in a jubilee for the redistribution of land.

The earliest Biblical reference to the special significance of the seventh year had no connection with the year of fallow but merely stated that a Hebrew servant should be free after six years.<sup>4</sup> Apparently each individual's service began when he was sold and terminated six years later, regardless of the relation of that date to the year of fallow. The earliest reference to the year of fallow itself provided that after six years of bearing in response to the owner's cultivation, the land was to lie fallow during the seventh so that the poor might eat and be satisfied, after which the beasts of the field might eat. The same provision extended to the vineyard and the olive grove.<sup>5</sup>

The chief Biblical account of the seventh year is contained in *Leviticus*, 25:1-7, 20-22. These passages leave no question as to the manner of spending the six years, plainly stating that they were to be used for fruitful labor and that the seventh was to be a year of rest for the land during which labor aiming at the production of crops was forbidden. Instead, the land was to lie fallow, and even the grain and fruit which grew naturally under the circumstances were not to be harvested but used from the fields by the owner, his servants, the stranger, the owner's livestock, and other beasts. A man might eat grapes from his neighbor's vines so long as he carried none away. He might pluck corn with his hand from his neighbor's standing crop but might not

<sup>4</sup> *Exodus*, 21:2. Verses 3-11 amplify this simple statement. See also *Deuteronomy*, 15:12-18.

<sup>5</sup> *Exodus*, 23:10-11.

use a sickle.<sup>6</sup> The agricultural products of the six years were to be gathered and might be stored, but those of the seventh year were not to be used for profit. The regulation was humanitarian, if nothing more, but it presented other advantages to be discussed later.

The remainder of the chapter in *Leviticus* gives the provisions for the jubilee. Though the passages in *Exodus* contain provisions which undoubtedly came to be applied to the fallow year, now usually referred to as the sabbatical year, the verses in *Leviticus* furnish the principal basis for the later interpretations and elaborations.<sup>7</sup> A release of debts owed by Hebrews to Hebrews was provided for the seventh year.<sup>8</sup> The reading of the law at the Feast of Tabernacles in the sabbatical year, enjoined by Moses just before the close of his life, seems to be incidental to the original purpose of the observance of the fallow year.<sup>9</sup> In actual practice the entire law was probably not read, unless it was in 426 B.C. when Ezra acquainted the people with its provisions so long forgotten or neglected.<sup>10</sup> It is also probable that the reading of the law at the Feast of Tabernacles in 404 B.C. was in the shorter form referred to in the Mishna, and, since the covenant to observe the seventh year was associated with this reading, the shorter form was no doubt continued.<sup>11</sup>

Because of its relation to the sabbatical year, the law concerning the jubilee should also be mentioned. Its principal provision

<sup>6</sup> *Deuteronomy*, 23:24-25. See *Matthew*, 12:1; *Mark*, 2:23; and *Luke*, 6:1, for a problem that arose concerning this provision.

<sup>7</sup> Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 3(12):3.

<sup>8</sup> *Deuteronomy*, 15:1-11.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 31:10-13.

<sup>10</sup> *Nehemiah*, 8:8, 14, 17-18. It is clearly stated to be the first reading for many centuries. The dates of Biblical events are those given in the margin of *The Companion Bible* (Oxford, 1932). Since this article is not a critical study in chronology, dates are given merely for reference, but they are probably fairly accurate.

<sup>11</sup> *Nehemiah*, 9:3. According to the Mishna (*Sota*, 7:8), seven portions of *Deuteronomy* were read: 1:1 to 6:3; 6:4-8; 11:13-22; 14:22 to 15:23; 26:12-19; 17:14-20; and 17:27-28. The reading took place on the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles at the end of the fallow year. John McClintock and James Strong, *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, 9:201 (New York, 1880); *Nehemiah*, 10:31.

was concerned with the return of all people to the inheritance which had been assigned to their families when Canaan was distributed by lot.<sup>12</sup> There is a question whether the year of jubilee was to be observed after seven seven-year periods or was the last year of the seventh seven-year period. The literary evidence indicates that it was intended to follow the forty-ninth year.<sup>13</sup> The slight historical evidence in the Scriptural account seems to imply that both the forty-ninth and the fiftieth years were intended to be fallow.<sup>14</sup> A number of reputable Jewish authorities are agreed that the jubilee was the fiftieth year when in force during the time of the First Temple but that it was the forty-ninth or the seventh sabbatical year during the Second Temple when its observance was only nominal. There is no evidence that the jubilee was observed in more than name in post-exilic times.<sup>15</sup> The fact that Hebrews considered their ownership of land a sacred trust would imply that their system of land tenure had very ancient sanction.<sup>16</sup>

The passages in *Leviticus* relating to the sabbatical year differ in terminology from other parts of the same book. Although the subject is the only one in the book which is introduced with a reference to Mount Sinai, three sections close in that manner.<sup>17</sup> Apparently the spiritual regulations were associated with the tabernacle of the congregation, but the passage which deals with the moral or economic life of the people was appropriately associated with a secular place. What is now usually called the

<sup>12</sup> *Numbers*, 26:53-56. See *ibid.*, 32, 33:53-55; and *Joshua*, 13:15-32, 15:1-12, 16:1 to 17:11, 18:10 to 19:49, for references to this division. See also *Numbers*, 36:4, for the regulations which kept land within each tribe.

<sup>13</sup> *Leviticus*, 25:10, 21-22. *Ibid.*, 23:15-16, relate to the Feast of Pentecost which was to be the fiftieth day; by analogy the jubilee might be expected to be the fiftieth year.

<sup>14</sup> *2 Kings*, 19:29; *Isaiah*, 37:30. This was about 519 B.C. and is one of the few references which imply any observance of the sabbatical year before the exile. It should be noted that in the Septuagint, *Isaiah*, 37:30, seems to indicate only one fallow year. See L. C. Brenton, tr., *The Septuagint Version of the Old Testament According to the Vatican Text*, 2:714 (London, 1844).

<sup>15</sup> Isidore Singer, ed., *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, 10:606 (New York, 1916).

<sup>16</sup> *Ruth*, 4:3-6, about 1300 B.C.; *1 Kings*, 21:3, about 800 B.C.; *Micah*, 2:2, about 600 B.C.; *Isaiah*, 5:8, before 500 B.C.; *Jeremiah*, 32:7-12, about 478 B.C.

<sup>17</sup> *Leviticus*, 7:38. 25:1. 26:46, 27:34.

sabbatical year, in the Scriptures, is variously termed the seventh year, the year of release, the sabbath of the land, and the year of liberty, depending upon the idea to be emphasized in each particular passage.

The practice of letting ground lie fallow was general in ancient times. In some instances perhaps it was merely to rest the soil,<sup>18</sup> but usually it was to conserve the moisture as in modern dry-land farming. Ordinarily the ground lay fallow in alternate years, but during the idle year it was cultivated not less than three times.<sup>19</sup>

The provisions for the sabbatical year relate to land, servants, and debts. The part concerning land merely stipulates that it should lie idle and that the trees and vines should remain unpruned during the seventh year. In view of the fact that the logical time for the commencement of this year of fallow was after the ingathering of crops it seems likely that it began on the first day of the month Tishri, or about the first of October. Were it to begin in the spring with the Jewish calendar year, two years without crops would necessarily follow in order to have a year of fallow, for the crops already in the fields could not be harvested and no sowing could take place the following fall. By letting the ground lie idle God's right of ownership was acknowledged in a manner which was of positive benefit to the land. The Hebrews were commanded to farm for six years, throughout which they were to gather produce into their storehouses. At no time, however, were they to glean their fields clean or gather all their grapes.<sup>20</sup> Undoubtedly the provision that mixed seed should not be sown was instituted so that there would be no question as to the purity of the flour used in the sacrifices.<sup>21</sup>

It may be questioned whether the spontaneous crop of a country would be sufficient to sustain its population for a year. How-

<sup>18</sup> T. C. Williams, tr., *The Georgics and Eclogues of Vergil*, 25 (Cambridge, Mass., 1915), translating *Georgic*, 1:71-72.

<sup>19</sup> E. C. Semple, *Geography of the Mediterranean Region*, 385-386, 402-403 (New York, 1931).

<sup>20</sup> *Leviticus*, 19:9, 23:22, 25:3; *Deuteronomy*, 24:19-21.

<sup>21</sup> *Leviticus*, 19:19.

ever, there was no command against storing for the sabbatical year and thus diligence and thrift were rewarded. There was also a promise of a much greater crop in the sixth year,<sup>22</sup> which could not be a result of natural causes since then the ground would be more nearly exhausted than at any other time in the seven-year period. Furthermore, there is at least one account in ancient literature of some such system. It is said that in early times there were many places in Albania where the land when sown once produced two or even three crops, the first a crop of even fiftyfold and the others coming up without additional plowing.<sup>23</sup> Though Palestine was not usually reputed to be an exceedingly fertile land, making allowances for the probable exaggeration of hearsay with regard to Albania, some return should be expected from natural seeding of grain left in the field.

The references in ancient literature to returns from seeding fall naturally into two groups: one, in which yields are about what would be expected from the same sort of soil today; and the other, in which they are so large as to be considered impossible by Ellen Churchill Semple.<sup>24</sup>

In the former group is the statement of Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 B.C.) referring to Leontine in Sicily, which reads: "On an acre of Leontini ground about a medimnus of wheat is usually sown, according to the regular and constant allowance of seed. The land returns about eightfold on a fair average, but in an extraordinarily favourable season, about tenfold,"<sup>25</sup> and that of Marcus Terentius Varro (116-27 ? B.C.) who said, "the influence of the kind of soil in a district is so great that the same seed yields in some places ten-fold, in others fifteen-fold, as in several parts of Etruria."<sup>26</sup>

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 25:21.

<sup>23</sup> H. L. Jones, tr., *The Geography of Strabo*, 5:225 (New York, 1917-1932), translating *Geography*, 11 (4):2. Strabo lived from about 63 B.C. to about 24 A.D.

<sup>24</sup> Semple, *Geography of the Mediterranean Region*, 388.

<sup>25</sup> C. D. Yonge, tr., *The Orations of Marcus Tullius Cicero*, 1:343 (London, 1921), translating *In Verrem*, *Second Pleading*, 3:47.

<sup>26</sup> Lloyd Storr-Best, tr., *Varro on Farming*, 92 (London, 1912), translating *Rerum Rusticarum*, 1:44. Semple (*Geography of the Mediterranean Region*, 388) is apparently mistaken in her statement which implies that Columella said that in his time only a fourfold return was received. What he said in the reference



Of the second group of references, in addition to Strabo, may be mentioned the Biblical comment, "Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year an hundredfold."<sup>27</sup> Herodotus (484?-423 B.C.), referring to Mesopotamia, wrote: "This territory is of all that we know the best by far for producing corn . . . it is so good that it returns as much as two-hundred-fold for the average, and when it bears at its best it produces three-hundred-fold." He said, moreover, of Libya: "when it bears best it produces a hundred-fold, but the land in the region of Kinyps produces sometimes as much as three-hundred-fold."<sup>28</sup> Varro claimed that, "In Italy too, in the country about Sybaris, they say that the usual yield is a hundred fold, and in Syria near Gadara, and in Africa in Byzacium from one peck the return is likewise a hundred pecks."<sup>29</sup> In the parable of the sower, Jesus spoke of certain good ground which brought forth thirtyfold, sixtyfold, and even a hundredfold.<sup>30</sup> Caius Plinius Secundus (23-79 A.D.), better known as Pliny the Younger, stated that in ordinary years land in Byzacium yielded one hundred and fifty-fold. In another place he said that the Byzacium crop that yields so remarkably is common wheat.<sup>31</sup>

No references have been found to ancient yields so low as four-fold and fivefold. Cicero mentioned a yield of eightfold to tenfold in Sicily, and Varro tenfold to fifteenfold in Etruria. Against these Strabo spoke of a yield of fiftyfold in Albania, and there are two Scriptural references, separated by hundreds of years, to yields of one hundredfold in Syria with additional mention of

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cited is that a return of one fourth of one hundred sestertii from a jugerum of land in corns could hardly be remembered. See Columella, *Of Husbandry*, 119 (London, 1745), translating 3:3. Her reference to the small yield reported by Cato the Censor (234-149 B.C.) has not been located.

<sup>27</sup> *Genesis*, 26:12.

<sup>28</sup> G. C. Macaulay, tr., *The History of Herodotus*, 1:95, 369 (London, 1918), translating 1:193, 198.

<sup>29</sup> Storr-Best, tr., *Varro on Farming*, 92-93, translating 1:44.

<sup>30</sup> *Matthew*, 13:8; *Mark*, 4:8; *Luke*, 8:8.

<sup>31</sup> Philemon Holland, tr., *Pliny's History of the World*, pt. 1, p. 505, 564-565 (London, 1601), translating 17:5, 18:10. Semple's reference (*Geography of the Mediterranean Region*, 388) to Pliny, 18:55, does not give yield but merely the amount of seed of various grains to be sown.



sixtyfold and thirtyfold in the later instance. Varro mentioned a yield of one hundredfold in Syria near Gadara and in Sybaris, Italy and Byzacium, Africa. Herodotus said that Libya at its best produced one hundredfold and mentioned a yield of two hundredfold to three hundredfold in Mesopotamia and three hundredfold in Kinyps in Africa, and Pliny cited a yield of one hundred and fiftyfold for Byzacium.

There are only two references to small yields, and they refer to land in Italy and Sicily; to yields of fiftyfold or more there are ten extending over three continents, being mentioned by six authors—one Hebrew, two Greeks, two Romans, and one Hebrew writing in Greek. It is plausible, therefore, to presume that there is some truth back of the latter statements.

Data compiled by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics of the United States Department of Agriculture show that the average return from wheat in the United States for the period 1928-1933 was 862,645 bushels harvested from 85,126 bushels of seed, a little less than tenfold, and from corn, 2,522,065 bushels from 17,408 bushels of seed, or more than one hundred and forty-fourfold.<sup>32</sup> These figures are well within the range of the more extravagant ancient claims.<sup>33</sup> While it is true that the corn of America was not known in the Old World at that early period, perhaps other grains of that time gave equally large returns. As the average yield per acre of wheat and corn for the same period,  $14\frac{2}{3}$  bushels and  $24\frac{3}{5}$  bushels respectively, is only about 11.3 percent of the maximum known yield of  $122\frac{1}{2}$  bushels and 225 bushels, it is reasonable to suppose that with greater care considerable improvement could be made in returns from seed in the United States.<sup>34</sup> The returns reported from ancient times and the maximum known returns of the present time present a challenge to improvement of agricultural technique.

<sup>32</sup> Work sheets in the U. S. Bureau of Agricultural Economics.

<sup>33</sup> O. W. Willcox, "The Real Farm Problem," *Economic Forum*, 2(1):35-36 (Winter, 1934). The maximum yields are from commercial fields that have shown profits above cost of fertilizer and other field costs.

<sup>34</sup> U. S. Department of Agriculture, *Yearbook*, 1934, p. 387, 414. As these tables show yields per acre by calendar years, it is necessary to use the figures for 1929-1934 to get the yields for the fiscal years 1928-1933.

The provision for the seventh year relating to servants aimed at periodical equality of opportunity for the people so that a man forced into servitude by reverses should again be free at the close of six years. If, however, he preferred to continue as a servant, he could have his ear bored with an awl as a token of his voluntary submission to lifelong bondage. In all cases the provision applied only to Hebrew servants.

It is not clear whether the regulation concerning debts implied merely a moratorium, since the debtors had no income during the sabbatical year, or meant the forgiveness of debts. In any case only debts owed to Hebrews were involved. According to the Talmud the laws respecting loans were not operative before the end of the sabbatical year, but the land release began with the year of rest.<sup>35</sup>

It would seem that the sabbatical year was observed but slightly if at all early in the history of the Hebrews in Canaan. Although the wording of the commandment might imply that the year after entering Canaan should be the first sabbatical year, it is generally conceded that this was not the case, but that the first cycle began fourteen years later after the conquest and distribution of the land.<sup>36</sup> Thus the first fallow year would be the twenty-first after entering Canaan. Though it was predicted in the time of Moses that in case of a falling away and disobedience to God's commands the land should lie desolate until it had enjoyed its sabbaths,<sup>37</sup> there is no record in the books of the Old Testament that the land ever lay fallow one year in seven during the time which they cover. The references to the perpetual inheritance imply that rights to land were held sacred,<sup>38</sup> but there is no way of knowing whether the other regulations aiming at equality were carried out. The first definite expression, made not earlier than 518 B.C. and possibly much later, stated that the Hebrews should serve the King of Babylon for seventy years.<sup>39</sup> Again, not earlier than 489 B.C., Jeremiah

<sup>35</sup> Singer, *Jewish Encyclopedia*, 10:605.

<sup>36</sup> *Leviticus*, 25:2; Singer, *Jewish Encyclopedia*, 10:607.

<sup>37</sup> *Leviticus*, 26:34-35, 43.

<sup>38</sup> See footnote 17.

<sup>39</sup> *Jeremiah*, 25:11.

prophesied the return from captivity after seventy years.<sup>40</sup> Though neither of these references specifically mentioned the keeping of the sabbaths for the land, a later reference cited prophecies of Jeremiah as indicating that the reason for the seventy years of captivity was that the land might enjoy sabbaths.<sup>41</sup> About 465 B.C., Ezekiel, in giving the organization of affairs for Israel's future time of glory, referred to the year of release for the land.<sup>42</sup> So far as is definitely known, the only instance of an attempt to keep the provisions of the year of rest prior to the return from captivity was made about 479 B.C. when servants were liberated, but since their masters later took them back not even on this occasion was the law kept as originally intended.<sup>43</sup> Whatever the attitude of the Hebrews before the captivity, they came back from exile fully convinced that they could merit and receive God's blessing by observance of the sabbatical year and other commandments. Therefore, in 404 B.C., one of the pledges they made was to keep the seventh year, and apparently it was observed as strictly as possible from that time on.<sup>44</sup>

The first secular account of the observance refers to events in 334 B.C., but it was written long afterwards. When Alexander the Great, direct from the capture of Gaza, approached Jerusalem, he was met by Jaddus, the high priest, in his purple and gold robes, the other priests in their fine linen, and the multitude arrayed in white. He was much impressed by the sight, remarking that he had seen the high priest thus attired in a dream some time before when he was exhorted to proceed at once in the advance against the Persians, and for this reason he revered the God whom Jaddus represented. When, in the Temple, the prophecy of Daniel that one of the Greeks should destroy the Persian Empire was shown him, Alexander supposed that he was the person meant, and on the following day asked the people what he should do for them. When the High Priest asked that

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 29:10.

<sup>41</sup> *2 Chronicles*, 36:21.

<sup>42</sup> *Ezekiel*, 46:17.

<sup>43</sup> *Jeremiah*, 34:8-15.

<sup>44</sup> *Nehemiah*, 10:31.

they be allowed to enjoy the laws of their forefathers and pay no tribute in the seventh year, he granted the request and also that the Jews in Babylon and Media were to enjoy their own laws.<sup>45</sup>

The Samaritans also met Alexander with splendor and enthusiasm a short distance from Jerusalem and invited him to honor their temple also. Upon his acceptance of the invitation for some indefinite future time, they requested that he remit their tribute every seventh year as they did not sow then. When they admitted that they were Hebrews but not Jews he promised to look into the matter on his return but did not make a definite commitment at this time.<sup>46</sup> There is no record that he ever granted the request.

In 163 B.C., both Bethsura and Jerusalem surrendered to Antiochus V (Eupator) of Syria because, as it was the sabbatical year, the ground was not cultivated and provisions were scarce. Moreover, many outsiders had moved in for protection, thus helping to consume the supplies that had been stored.<sup>47</sup> Immunities, probably including the remitting of the tribute for the seventh year, were promised to the Jews in 153 B.C. when Demetrius I, just before his defeat and death, made very generous promises which his son, Demetrius II, confirmed to Jonathan in 145 B.C. and to Simon in 143 B.C.<sup>48</sup> Although none of these charters specifically mentioned the sabbatical year, it was no doubt implied in them.

In 135 B.C., John Hyrcanus is said to have ceased besieging Ptolemy in Dagon because it was a sabbatical year.<sup>49</sup> He sent

<sup>45</sup> Probably *Daniel*, 8:3-8, 20-22; Josephus, *Antiquities*, 11(8):5.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 11(8):6.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 12(9):5; and *2 Maccabees*, 6:49, 53. This was the one hundred and fiftieth year of the Seleucid era. See *2 Maccabees*, 6:20. The text used in this paper is that of Henry Cotton, *The Five Books of Maccabees, in English* (Oxford, 1832). His numbering of the books does not correspond with that ordinarily used. His Book 1 is commonly known as Book 3, Book 2 as Book 1, Book 3 as Book 2, but his Books 4 and 5 are usually known by those numbers. The dates of events in the Maccabean period follow Cotton, and as in the case of Biblical events, they are inserted merely for reference. However, they are probably relatively correct.

<sup>48</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities*, 13(2):3, (4):9, (6):7; and *2 Maccabees*, 10:28-45, 11:30-37, 13:36-40.

<sup>49</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities*, 13(8):1, and *Jewish Wars*, 1(2):4. The account in *5 Maccabees*, 20:17-18, does not mention the sabbatical year. At first the Jews

an embassy to Rome in 128 B.C. with requests for special favors for the Jews and the renewal of former pledges, which must have been granted the next year.<sup>50</sup> About 47 to 45 B.C., Hyrcanus, grandson of John Hyrcanus, sent ambassadors to Julius Caesar, asking the renewal of the former treaty with the Jews. Josephus gave an account of what is evidently the same transaction, but certainly his version of the edict is a composite.<sup>51</sup> Although some of his text is very corrupt, the two passages which refer to exemption from tribute in the sabbatical year are apparently authentic.<sup>52</sup> Immunities granted to the Jews by Alexander, Ptolemy, and Caesar are mentioned by Josephus.<sup>53</sup> In 37 B.C., Herod succeeded in capturing Jerusalem because of lack of provisions due to the sabbatical year. Their scarcity after the capture of the city is also mentioned.<sup>54</sup> References to the sabbatical year or to immunities of the Jews are also found in Josephus and in the Books of the Maccabees.<sup>55</sup>

Philo Judaeus made several references to the sabbatical year.<sup>56</sup> Tacitus, an unfriendly critic who certainly would not invent the

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refrained from fighting on the sabbath day and did not even attempt defense. See Josephus, *Antiquities*, 12(1):1, (6):2. Later they defended themselves on the sabbath day. See *ibid.*, 13(1):3. Still later they would not interfere with the engineering works of the enemy on the sabbath day. See *ibid.*, 14(4):2.

<sup>50</sup> *5 Maccabees*, 21:31-33, 22:1-7. Apparently the first agreement was made in 161 B.C. (*2 Maccabees*, 8:22-32) and was renewed in 144 B.C. (*2 Maccabees*, 12:1). Josephus, *Antiquities*, 13(9):2, evidently refers to the same transaction, though it differs in most details from the other account.

<sup>51</sup> *5 Maccabees*, 44:1. Verses 4-17 give Caesar's reply. Though no mention is made of the sabbatical year, no doubt it was one of the concessions intended. Josephus, *Antiquities*, 14(10):6.

<sup>52</sup> Michel S. Ginsburg, *Rome et la Judée*, 100, 172-173 (Paris, 1928).

<sup>53</sup> Flavius Josephus, *Against Apion*, 2(4). Caesar's pillar at Alexandria is mentioned in Josephus, *Antiquities*, 14(10):1.

<sup>54</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities*, 14(16):2, 15(1):2. *5 Maccabees*, 52:27, makes no mention of its being a sabbatical year, and 52:12 seems to imply that it was not; nor is the sabbatical year mentioned in an account of the same incidents in *Jewish Wars*, 1(18):2.

<sup>55</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities*, 16(1):1, (2):3; *4 Maccabees*, 2:8.

<sup>56</sup> C. D. Yonge, tr., *The Works of Philo Judaeus, the Contemporary of Josephus* (London, 1854-55), "On the Ten Commandments," 3:172, "A Treatise on the Number Seven," 3:264, "On the Creation of Magistrates," 3:407, "On Humanity," 3:434. Philo Judaeus lived from about 20 B.C. to about 54 A.D.



idea of a year of rest, writing about thirty years after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. concerning the customs of the Jews, said: "They are said to have devoted the seventh day to rest, because that day brought an end to their troubles. Later, finding idleness alluring, they gave up the seventh year as well to sloth."<sup>57</sup> When Saint Paul said, "Ye observe days and months and times and years," he may have intended a reference to the sabbatical year.<sup>58</sup> The Talmud contains numerous allusions to it. After the fall of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jews, some provisions of the law could not be observed for obvious reasons, and rabbinical enactments and interpretations released them from observing the sabbatical year. In the Zionist movement of today, the question has again arisen and is being met in the spirit of the ancient lawgiver.<sup>59</sup>

So far as may be judged, the seventh year was not intended to be primarily a time for spiritual development, since no special feast or convocation was associated with it. The objectives were moral and economic values. However, providing for oneself during six years and then trusting God for the seventh would have a tendency to bring about greater reliance upon Divine beneficence at all times.

Apart from the spiritual implications of the sabbatical year, the curtailing of grain production necessitated a septennial reduction in the number of livestock which, by culling out the unfit, resulted in improvement in the quality of the remaining animals. Furthermore, the decrease in the quantity of grain reduced the tendency of the people to trade with neighboring countries and served to prevent the accumulation of unwieldy wealth. The people thus became more nearly economically self-sufficient and capable of meeting their own needs at all times. The year of fallow was also of unquestioned value to the land. Fallow is a preventive of exhaustion, weediness, and lar-

<sup>57</sup> W. Hamilton Fyfe, tr., *Tacitus' Histories*, 2:206 (Oxford, 1912), translating *Histories*, 5(4):3.

<sup>58</sup> *Galations*, 4:10.

<sup>59</sup> Singer, *Jewish Encyclopedia*, 10:607.



vae,<sup>60</sup> and in dry regions a conserver of moisture. Furthermore, although the original purpose of the observance of the seventh year seems to have been secular, the reading of the law had a tendency to draw the people back to a greater regard and reverence for God.

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<sup>60</sup> *Self-Interpreting Bible*, 1:405 (St. Louis, 1905).

## PROPOSALS OF GOVERNMENT AID TO AGRICULTURAL SETTLEMENT DURING THE DEPRESSION OF 1873-1879<sup>1</sup>

The last two decades have seen considerable excellent research on the development of American land policies. The writings of Professors Payson J. Treat and B. H. Hibbard are especially fine studies of the methods used in disposing of the once extensive public domain, and the work of Professors G. M. Stephenson and Marcus L. Hansen, as well as that of Dr. Theodore C. Blegen, in tracing the nineteenth century population movements from the countries of Northern Europe to their eventual homes in the upper Mississippi Valley, has provided a real understanding of the techniques used in recruiting settlers and the difficulties which confronted them on their arrival in a region that was rapidly turning to a species of capitalistic agriculture.<sup>2</sup> Likewise, the investigations of Professors James B. Hedges and Paul W. Gates show that the activities of the railroad land-agents and the proceeds from the sale of the choice lands granted by the State and National Governments were indispensable to the directors of the Illinois Central and the Northern Pacific railroads in supplying funds for construction as well as for immediate profits.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This paper was presented at the joint session of the Agricultural History Society with the American Historical Association at Philadelphia on Dec. 29, 1937.

<sup>2</sup> P. J. Treat, *The National Land System, 1785-1820* (New York, 1910); B. H. Hibbard, *A History of the Public Land Policies* (New York, 1924); G. M. Stephenson, *Political History of the Public Lands, From 1840 to 1862, From Preemption to Homestead* (Boston, 1917), *The Religious Aspects of Swedish Immigration* (Minneapolis, 1932), and *A History of American Immigration* (Boston, 1926); M. L. Hansen, "Official Encouragement of Immigration to Iowa," *Iowa Journal of History and Politics*, 19:159-195 (April 1921); T. C. Blegen, "The Competition of the Northwestern States for Immigrants," *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, 3:3-29; (September 1919), and "Minnesota's Campaign for Immigrants," *Swedish Historical Society of America, Yearbook*, 11:3-83 (1926).

<sup>3</sup> J. B. Hedges, "The Colonization Work of the Northern Pacific Railroad," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 13:311-342 (December 1926), and "Promotion of Immigration to the Pacific Northwest by the Railroads," *ibid.*, 15:183-203 (September 1928); P. W. Gates, *The Illinois Central Railroad and Its Colonization Work* (Cambridge, 1934).

These colonization studies reveal the pressure of the Grand Army of the Republic on Congress for land legislation which was supposed to benefit the discontented veterans. Some hints have also been given of the extensive activities of the various State land and immigration departments in their efforts to attract settlers from all economic classes in the East as well as from Europe.

In recent years the general public has heard of the National Government's creation of various New Deal agencies such as Subsistence Homesteads and the Resettlement Administration to assist the victims of industrial disasters, droughts, and dust storms to settle on new land where their chances of maintaining an acceptable standard of living would be increased. The movement of farmers from Minnesota and the Dakotas to the Matanuska Valley in Alaska is one of the more spectacular of these experiments. However, nowhere in the studies of land policy and land settlement or in the New Deal propaganda blurbs is there any mention of the fact that during the sessions of the Forty-fifth Congress in 1877-78, three bills were introduced which provided for Federal aid to industrial workers, stranded in the East by the depression following 1873, who were anxious to try farming on the trans-Mississippi plains.

These three bills were sponsored by representatives of industrial centers, and each proposed a different approach to the constitutional and administrative difficulties inherent in any plan for National Government aid to population movement. On October 29, 1877, General N. P. Banks, one of the original Republicans then representing an industrialized section of Massachusetts, proposed the creation of a private corporation to operate under Government supervision. This corporate body was to be supplied with \$10,000,000—one half in greenbacks and the remainder from a special sale of United States bonds. Settlements were to be made in groups of twenty-five with free transportation and \$400 credit for each settler. The title to the land was to remain with the Government until all debts had been repaid with interest at one cent per day for each \$100 borrowed. Under a broad grant of corporate power, the board of the company was to

arrange all details of selection and settlement.<sup>4</sup> Banks' bill was printed and referred to the Committee on Public Lands but never reported.

On the same day, a similar measure was introduced by Hendrick B. Wright, a Democratic-Greenbacker of demagogic tendencies from Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. His private papers show that he expected the Greenback-Labor nomination for Governor of Pennsylvania in 1878 and even cherished ambitions for the Presidency in 1880.<sup>5</sup> Since Wright served on the House Committee on Public Lands, he was in a position to secure action on this bill. He proposed to use the General Land Office and its field agencies for administration. No provisions for transportation or for the selection of settlers were included; prospective homesteaders were merely to appear at a divisional land-office in the West, swear that they did not possess \$300 in property, and receive a \$500 loan in monthly installments of \$100. Individual mortgages at 3 percent were to be filed with the General Land Office and repaid in annual installments beginning at the end of the fifth year of occupancy. Capital for this scheme was to be provided by the issuance of \$10,000,000 in new greenbacks.<sup>6</sup> There was no provision for the informational assistance on soil fertility, rainfall, transportation facilities, available markets, etc., which would have been so necessary to the unemployed mechanic from the East, and there were no adequate safeguards to prevent floating loafers in the West from exhausting the money before prospective settlers could arrive from the East.<sup>7</sup> This bill was printed and referred to Wright's committee but defeated in a final roll call after debate in the House.

The third bill was introduced on June 10, 1878, by that perennial storm center, General Benjamin F. Butler of Lowell, Massachusetts. He, too, had been the recipient of considerable Green-

<sup>4</sup> *House Resolution 20*, 45 Congress, 1 Session.

<sup>5</sup> The Hendrick B. Wright Papers in the possession of the Wyoming Historical and Geological Society, Wilkes-Barre, Pa. Unless otherwise noted, the letters cited in this article are in this collection.

<sup>6</sup> *House Resolution 110*, 45 Congress, 1 Session.

<sup>7</sup> See speech by Thomas Ewing of Ohio in *Congressional Record*, 45 Congress, 3 Session, Appendix, p. 175, for further criticisms of Wright's bill.

back support and accordingly proceeded to fashion an intricate remedy for the distress evident in his textile and shoe factory district.<sup>8</sup> His correspondence with labor leaders and the previous criticisms of the Banks and Wright bills enabled him to frame a measure which supposedly met all constitutional and administrative objections. He planned to use the War Department and the Army as agencies to supervise and execute the entire project, and by claiming that the plan was primarily for defense against the Indians, he hoped to overcome constitutional difficulties. The proposal called for the location of large groups in "military settlements" on sites containing a minimum of forty-eight full sections. The details of the instructions for controlling the operation of the scheme are amazing in their scope. Lands were to be selected near present or future Army posts by a committee consisting of the general in command of the Army, the Commissioner of the General Land Office, and the Commissioner of Agriculture. The locations were to be made on the basis of information supplied by the commanding officer and medical officer of every existing army post, as well as by the field officials of the Land Office. The questionnaire to be sent to these officials contained sixteen queries on soil, pasture land, mineral deposits, varieties of crops and fruits, rainfall and temperature, total head of cattle, horses and oxen then in use in each area selected, and the extent and condition of roads to the nearest railroad station.

Butler's provisions for the selection of suitable settlers involved

<sup>8</sup> Section 15 of this bill (*House Resolution 5141*, 45 Congress, 2 Session) contains the following excellent statement of the political and economic thinking which was the basis for each of the bills introduced: "To promote in the best practicable manner the general interests and industries of the whole people; to provide for the permanent welfare of the industrious laboring classes of our citizens in all parts of the Union by affording means and opportunity to a sufficient number of families of the unemployed or insufficiently paid moral and industrious laborers and producers, who are an involuntary surplus in the industrial marts of the States and District named in this act without prospect of employment or betterment of condition therein, to remove therefrom for agricultural settlement upon the unoccupied public lands in the Territories where they may become a prosperous class of producers and consumers, instead of remaining, as they now are, competitors for employment that cannot be furnished in the said States and District."—*Congressional Record*, 45 Congress, 2 Session, June 10, 1878, p. 4382.

no hit-or-miss arrangements. He wanted 333,333 families and he wanted them from New England, the Middle Atlantic States, and Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Missouri. The omission of the Southern and frontier States from the list seems significant. The President of the United States was to select a retired Army officer, then living in each of the designated States, to serve on a board which was to choose the quota of families to be rescued from the destitution of the existing industrial depression. The head of each family was to take an oath that he did not own property assessed in excess of \$500, and that the combined earnings of his entire family group had not exceeded \$3.00 per day for six months prior to his application. Preference was to be granted wounded veterans and widows of veterans, provided they counted a son over fifteen years of age within the family fold. Transportation was to be supplied by the Quartermaster Department of the Army, and the expense added to the settler's indebtedness to the Government. Each settler was to be entitled to equipment worth \$1,250, or as much as he needed to supplement his own possessions. The bill even contained a suggested list of items necessary for beginning life on the plains, such as horses, cows, a covered wagon, implements, tools, clothing, medicine, food rations, cattle feed, seeds, and a ready-made frame dwelling.

After the families became settled they would find themselves indebted to the Government for \$1,500, which was to be repaid in twenty annual installments of \$75, the title to their land remaining with the Government until the final payment. This extensive scheme was to be financed by the simple process of having the United States Treasury print \$420,000,000 worth of additional greenbacks.

In spite of its many desirable features, Butler only succeeded in having his bill printed in the *Congressional Record* and referred to the Committee on Education and Labor where it was allowed to rest in peace. The currency features alone were enough to condemn the plan in the minds of politicians and many of the general public.

It may seem strange that three bills, whose purpose was the "general welfare" should be presented to Congress during a



decade of Republican domination. American writers in describing this era usually point to the growing industrialization of productive processes, the increased use of the corporation, the capitalistic expansion of agriculture, and the growing acceptance of the laissez-faire fetish. Too little notice has been taken of the fact that this sudden shift in American economic life produced realistic minority protests against such trends. These dissents have usually been grouped under the single heading of "western discontent" and used to substantiate some perverted form of the Turnerian hypothesis. The discovery of the more critical scholars that the Greenback-Labor movement had considerable support from the laboring classes of the East has been rather lightly dismissed with the insinuation that the proletariat following was merely being misled by demagogic politicians seeking votes. Undoubtedly smart candidates for office never neglected an opportunity to support popular movements, yet anyone who studies the press in the 1870's, as well as the correspondence and speeches of such leaders as Wright and Butler, cannot fail to be impressed with the amazing groundswell among the working classes against the economic exploitation of man and nature.

By 1877, the public had been well prepared for a scheme which called for Government assistance in the settlement of agricultural lands. The extensive advertising of the land-grant railroads in agricultural periodicals and newspapers, the activities of eastern land speculating companies anxious to enhance the value of their western properties, the efforts of the immigration commissioners of the Western States, and finally the forceful and successful efforts of the Grand Army of the Republic to facilitate western land settlement for veterans, had publicized the extent and richness of lands which supposedly needed only energetic hands to yield bountiful crops to sell at high prices. The severity of the industrial depression in the East seemed all the more harsh in comparison with the wide-spread belief that western agriculture was suffering little if at all during this period. In such a situation the American laborer remembered that he or at least his father had begun life on a farm, and besides, any American could be a successful farmer. Hadn't millions of settlers found fame

and fortune on the western plains? Why shouldn't those who were starving in a company town be allowed to go West? Why shouldn't the Government which had given away millions of acres of land to corporations, supply needy individuals with meager loans of \$500 or \$1,000?<sup>9</sup> This tradition was paraded in the eastern newspapers; even the conservative *Philadelphia Press* remarked that "Greeley's advice is no longer necessary, for the people of the overcrowded manufacturing districts in the East are going West."<sup>10</sup> The same journal also voiced contemporary

<sup>9</sup> This feeling was given full expression in the petition signed by 20,792 citizens of the 12th Pennsylvania Congressional District and presented by Wright on Oct. 25, 1877: "The undersigned, workingmen of the State of Pennsylvania and citizens of the United States, humbly pray that a law may be passed giving national aid and assistance to such persons as are qualified to settle upon the public domain under the provisions of the homestead act passed by Congress and approved May 20, 1862, to enable them to commence their improvements.

"The disasters which have befallen the mining, mercantile, and manufacturing interests of the country have thrown many of us out of employment. While we are ready and willing to labor, we cannot procure work, and have exhausted the small means which we possessed, and hundreds and thousands of us are in a state of absolute want. We see no prospect of an immediate change for the better. The future is shrouded in gloom.

"While Congress has granted millions of acres of the public domain and millions upon millions of dollars as subsidies to chartered companies and associations, we cannot but hope that Congress will hear the prayer of the laboring man for assistance in the dark hour of his necessity and pressing want.

"It is not the part of wisdom for a great country to allow suffering among the people when there is ample means to prevent or at least alleviate it. The workingmen of this land are better entitled to the bounty of Government than aggregated wealth. We, too, pay our taxes. We fill the rank and file of the nation's Army when required; and labor is the basis of the national prosperity.

"We are in need. We ask you to give us a helping hand. We do not ask it as a gift. We ask it as a loan. We are willing to repay the principal and interest. We most respectfully pray for relief. We do it in the names of our wives and children. We do not prefer charges against the Government for its vast gifts to incorporated wealth; but we, the humble, unpretending workingmen of the country, out of employment, despondent, with little means of subsistence, humbly pray that you will do a little for us, compared with what you have done for the wealth of the nation. Our demands are not exorbitant, and the loan of a small sum to give us a start in our new western home will be gratefully acknowledged.

"And, as in duty bound, we will ever pray, etc."—*Congressional Record*, 45 Congress, 1 Session, 164-165.

<sup>10</sup> *Philadelphia Press*, Jan. 28, 1878.

belief in the "safety-valve" idea with the statement that "Emigration Westward has always followed a panic in the East . . . it transfers from us our surplus population."<sup>11</sup> Various relief associations were working to facilitate this exodus by cooperating with speculators and railroads, and were even forming land associations themselves. The New England Association for the Unemployed with headquarters at New Haven, Connecticut, was one of the staunchest supporters of Wright's bill.

The writings and speeches of the leaders of various political groups also paved the way for Government aid to settlers. By implication the Granger movement suggested that the Government, through lenient laws and generous land grants, had given too much to the corporations and too little to the American voters. A resurgence of organizing activity had appeared in the ranks of labor and the Knights of Labor soon became a formidable political influence. Likewise, the labor elements in the National Greenback-Labor Party made a desperate attempt to gain control at its Toledo convention in February 1879, and thus compel the insertion in the party platform of their demands for legislative remedies to hold the capitalistic monster in check. This new political group reached the peak of its power in that same year when it polled a million votes, sent fifteen Nationals to the House of Representatives and staged a Congressional caucus with thirty-five members and sympathizers present.<sup>12</sup> Democratic blasts against the excesses of Grant's administration often reminded the country that although most of the territorial additions to the United States had been acquired under Democratic auspices, the Republican Party had recently been giving it away to speculators and railroads. When the Democrats assumed control of the House in 1875, the complaints of the industrial classes were so persistent that a Congressional investigating committee composed of six lawyers, with the iron-master, Abram S. Hewitt, as chairman, was finally appointed to "inquire into and ascertain the causes of general business depression, especially

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, Mar. 2, 1878.

<sup>12</sup> Wright to his son George, Mar. 28, 1879.

of labor."<sup>13</sup> Hendrick B. Wright was much offended by Speaker Randall's failure to name him to this committee. Randall offered the rather weak explanation that J. M. Thompson, the Republican Representative from Butler, Pennsylvania, who had presented the resolution, could not be left off, and so he did not feel free to appoint another member from the Keystone State. The Speaker attempted to calm Wright's ruffled feelings by pointing out that four of the committee were friends of labor and that since there was no appropriation for a clerk, its work probably would not amount to much.<sup>14</sup>

Randall's pessimistic prophecy was decidedly incorrect as the committee conducted extensive hearings at New York City, Scranton, and Washington, D. C., during August 1878, and later submitted a 675-page report. Eleven of the more than one hundred letters filed with the committee endorsed Wright's land bill by name or in principle,<sup>15</sup> and about the same number of witnesses spoke favorably of Government aid to land settlement as a means of ending the depression. This testimony was gathered from labor leaders, artisans, and small business men, as well as from a variety of responsible and irresponsible students of economic ills. One of the learned witnesses, who claimed to be speaking for the "Congress of Humanity," included a scholarly bibliography on previous colonization movements in Europe and South America in his remarks.<sup>16</sup> Other and more authoritative testimony was supplied by W. G. Sumner, Charles F. Adams, Jr., and also Carroll D. Wright, who in addition helped to compile extensive statistics on labor conditions. However, the committee was unable to draw any practical suggestions from this mass of testimony and made no definite recommendations to Congress.

Only the bill introduced by Wright reached the floor of the House for limited debate, and since his papers contain much

<sup>13</sup> "Investigation by a Select Committee of the House of Representatives relative to the Causes of the General Depression in Labor and Business," *House Miscellaneous Document 29*, 45 Congress, 3 Session (serial 1863).

<sup>14</sup> Samuel J. Randall to Wright, June 23 and 29, 1878.

<sup>15</sup> *House Miscellaneous Document 29*, p. 656-664.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 61-62.

detailed material on the techniques which he and his supporters used in attempting to write their dreams on the statute books, it may be of interest to follow the petition-pressure process step by step. In May 1877, Wright sent a manuscript copy of a stirring petition-heading in support of his projected land-settlement scheme to Terence V. Powderly, then president of Union No. 2 of the Machinists and Blacksmiths in Scranton, Pennsylvania. This worthy labor chief, who was soon to attain further prominence as mayor of his city, and later as leader of the Knights of Labor, cooperated energetically and promised to "circulate it so extensively through the State everywhere we have a Union . . . that you will have a Saratoga trunk full of petitions when you go."<sup>17</sup> During the last week of July, Wright announced his plan to his constituents,<sup>18</sup> and within a few weeks he received much scornful press publicity as well as many requests for information from interested correspondents who asked for and soon received copies of the petition-heading.<sup>19</sup> His friends relayed good reports from the man-in-the-street,<sup>20</sup> and a religious zealot in New York sent the first of a series of tedious letters exhorting the Protestant groups of America to emulate the example of "the Bishop of the Roman Church of Minnesota who has arranged with some Railroad that has large tracts of land unoccupied to put families thereon."<sup>21</sup> Numerous requests for copies of the *Congressional Record* to "enable the colonization groups to follow the debaters on the Colonization Bill" were granted by Wright after Congress met in special session in October 1877.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Terence V. Powderly to Wright, May 22, 1877.

<sup>18</sup> *Philadelphia Record*, Aug. 1, 1877.

<sup>19</sup> Letters to Wright from the following: John S. Given of Columbia, Pa., Aug. 7, 1877; James L. Wright of Philadelphia, Aug. 11, 1877; G. W. Bandell of Baltimore, Aug. 25, 1877; James Haggerty of Honeybrook, Pa., Sept. 19, 1877; Jacob Lohnes of Pittsburgh, Sept. 20, 1877; Dr. S. Pace of Sugar Notch, Pa., Sept. 26, 1877; W. H. Jones, Supt. of Schools in Newport, Ky., Nov. 14, 1877; and Robert Schilling of Cleveland, Dec. 28, 1877.

<sup>20</sup> Robert H. McKune to Wright, Oct. 8, 1877.

<sup>21</sup> Austin Packard to Wright, Oct. 13, 1877, Jan. 10, 1878, and Jan. 30, 1879.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas Connell to Wright, Oct. 9, 1877; F. J. Conlan of the "McClellan Rifles Literary Association" of Pittston, Pa., to Wright, Oct. 18, 1877; and Powderly to Wright, Oct. 22, 1877.



On October 19, a letter from Charles F. Buell, secretary of the New England Association for the Relief of the Unemployed, began a friendly and extensive correspondence with a series of private organizations which were conducting vigorous campaigns to aid the migration of the unemployed to agricultural lands in the West. Buell had already entered into negotiations with T. R. Tannatt, an agent of the Oregon Steamship Company, concerning lands which might be acquired by his association from the Northern Pacific Railroad,<sup>23</sup> and he offered to "bring influence to bear upon the delegation in Senate and House of Representatives from New England, to secure their earnest consideration, if not their endorsement [of Wright's bill]." <sup>24</sup> The next week Buell renewed his promises of support and went on to explain his own plan to "place men in communities, lower cost—\$5,000 for machinery, for a grain farm for 50 men—produce 100,000 bushels of wheat—net profit of \$1,000 per capita. . . . Invest 20 even 100 millions to remove surplus labor."<sup>25</sup> Wright also received communications from other relief associations with private projects for the settlement of lands purchased with the proceeds of bond sales.<sup>26</sup> Other correspondents voiced their approval of his efforts in lengthy documents which usually included observations on the disastrous effects of the rapid introduction of labor-saving machinery and offered land settlement as a cure-all for the depression.<sup>27</sup>

Wright's petition technique was so productive that by March 23, 1878, he could inform his son that "there are now a hundred thousand names, on our table asking its passage. They are from all parts of the Union."<sup>28</sup> Wright carried a petition with 20,792 signatures from his own Congressional District to Washington

<sup>23</sup> T. R. Tannatt to George A. Saxer, Dec. 1, 1877, and Charles F. Buell to Tannatt, Jan. 9, 1878, in the Henry Villard Papers, Harvard College Library. These letters are also quoted by Hedges in the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 15:191.

<sup>24</sup> Buell to Wright, Oct. 19, 1877.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, Oct. 23, 1877.

<sup>26</sup> H. E. Sharpe of Houston, Tex., to Wright, Oct. 26, 1877, Jan. 9, 21, 1878.

<sup>27</sup> G. W. Bandell of Baltimore to Wright, Sept. 5, 1877; W. C. Nichols of Plains, Pa., to Wright, Oct. 27, 1877; William Ruehrwein of Cincinnati to Wright, Dec. 13, 1877.

<sup>28</sup> Wright to his son George, Mar. 25, 1878.



when Congress convened in October 1877,<sup>29</sup> and his correspondence reveals that this list was supplemented with 1,548 names from Cleveland, which was soon followed by 3,000 more from the same city, and by "a large number of signers" from Nashville, Tennessee.<sup>30</sup> Another Cleveland correspondent later sent in a petition with 220 pages of signatures and complained that a similar roll of 275 pages had been wilfully destroyed.<sup>31</sup> Numerous communications from different sections of the Keystone State showed that the continued agitation in the ranks of labor which Powderly had promised was bearing fruit in the industrial centers. Congress was seemingly too busy with more important affairs, such as the Potter investigation and the Texas and Pacific subsidy, to be impressed with the imposing expression of public opinion which Wright had invoked, and he was unable to make any progress with the bill. On February 28, 1878, he wrote his son that "The committee on lands have unanimously agreed that I shall report back the Bill to the House for its action. I could have had a majority report but the minority would have made an adverse report, and I preferred it, in the way it is to a minority adverse report."<sup>32</sup> One of his correspondents soon took him to task for reporting the bill in this ineffectual manner and reminded him:

... we think that if there ever was a time when the Government should step in and make men and producers out of depressed humanity, and almost paupers, consumers, surely, that time is now. Tis the first time that the poor man has ever approached your august bodies asking aid, and it is only in his dire distress that he now approaches you, and 'on bended knee, and streaming eyes' begs the government to *loan* not *give* him to aid him to become a man, and keep his little ones from want, and the security to be such that the Government cannot lose. Many, many dollars have been given to rich corporations but none to the poor.<sup>33</sup>

Wright finally had his chance to report the bill back for a re-printing and for reference to the Committee of the Whole for

<sup>29</sup> *Congressional Record*, 45 Congress, 1 Session, Oct. 25, 1877, p. 164-165.

<sup>30</sup> George Ellis to Wright, Feb. 11, 18, 1878; John Mullen to Wright, Mar. 2, 1878.

<sup>31</sup> A. Hubbell to Wright, June 13, 1878.

<sup>32</sup> Wright to his son George, Feb. 28, 1878.

<sup>33</sup> S. T. Wilson of Altoona, Pa., to Wright, Feb. 26, 1878.

action on May 11, 1878, but he was forced to accept an interpellation from G. W. Hewitt of Alabama which revealed that this move did not mean that a majority of the Committee on Public Lands approved of the bill.<sup>34</sup> In fact, press reports stated that another member of the Committee on Public Lands later remarked that it had unanimously agreed not to recommend the bill.<sup>35</sup> However, its author cared little how the bill was reported so long as he had a chance to speak on it.

There is considerable evidence that both General Butler and Congressman Wright cooperated rather closely with the inner circle which controlled the National Greenback-Labor Party in 1877-78. They corresponded with W. A. A. Carsey, president of the New York branch of the Knights of Labor and in 1878 chairman of the national committee of the Greenbackers,<sup>36</sup> and they were continually urged to write for the *Irish World*, a New York journal which spoke for the party. Numerous editorials endorsing Wright's land bill as well as Wright's replies to pertinent questions asked by Powderly appeared in that labor sheet.<sup>37</sup> Although an unsuccessful effort was made on February 22, 1878, to force the national convention of the Greenbackers at Toledo to endorse Wright's bill,<sup>38</sup> correspondents hastened to inform the Pennsylvania Congressman that "the 6th and 7th Resolves of the Toledo platform covered the whole ground contemplated in your bill."<sup>39</sup> Other writers were more discouraged at the incessant harping on Greenbacks and taxation and voiced the opinion that Wright's bill would surely be endorsed by the party in the near future.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>34</sup> *Congressional Record*, 45 Congress, 2 Session, May 11, 1878, p. 3389.

<sup>35</sup> *Philadelphia Record*, May 13, 1878.

<sup>36</sup> W. A. A. Carsey to B. F. Butler, Nov. 15, 1877, in the Butler Papers (Manuscript Division, Library of Congress); Carsey to Wright, Nov. 22, 1878, in the Wright Papers.

<sup>37</sup> Patrick Ford to B. F. Butler, July 31, 1877, in the Butler Papers; Stephen Dillage to Wright, June 14, 1878, in the Wright Papers; and *Irish World and American Industrial Liberator* (New York), Oct. 6, 1877, Jan. 19, June 8, Sept. 14, 1878, Jan. 11, and Feb. 15, 1879.

<sup>38</sup> "Communism and Protection at the Capital," *Nation*, 26:146-147 (Feb. 28, 1878).

<sup>39</sup> George Ellis to Wright, Mar. 17, 1878.

<sup>40</sup> Dr. E. M. Epstein to Wright, Feb. 22, and Mar. 11, 1878.

In his home State Wright made such headway with his Greenback aspirations that a coalition of Democratic and Republican conservatives banded together to prevent his nomination for Governor in May 1878.<sup>41</sup> To achieve this end, they *gained control* of the State Greenback convention meeting at Philadelphia on May 9 and 10, 1878, which was the usual technique in contemporary Pennsylvania politics. Under the plea of party purity all candidates who had previously held office under the old parties were barred, and Mason, a corporation attorney, was chosen to head the ticket.<sup>42</sup> This action was a serious blow to Wright's prestige, and when followed by a general defeat for the Greenbackers in Pennsylvania in the fall of 1878, undoubtedly influenced the fate of his bill and the vigor of its support.

The reaction of the press during the years when Wright's measure was being agitated seems significant. Such conservative journals as the *Washington Star*, the *Washington Post*, the *New York Tribune*, and the *New York Times* practically ignored Wright, mentioning him only two or three times in nearly two years and then only in a scornful vein; although the *Tribune* and the *Post* felt called upon to hold him up to ridicule on six occasions.<sup>43</sup> The *Nation* treated him in a whimsical, paternalistic fashion; for example, when commenting on the final defeat of his bill it reported that "The House has good-naturedly extinguished the bill of Mr. Wright, the Pennsylvania Communist, providing for a government loan of \$500 to every person wishing to avail himself of the Homestead Act."<sup>44</sup> A sampling of the Pennsylvania papers, including the *Philadelphia Record*, the *Philadelphia Press*, and the *Harrisburg Patriot*, reveals real concern with the problems of the depression, but violent disagreement with the

<sup>41</sup> Wright to his son George, May 4, 1878; Nan Wright (his daughter) to Wright, May 10, 1878; *Philadelphia Record*, May 9, 10, 11, 1878; *Patriot* (Harrisburg), Apr. 10, 15, Nov. 1, 1878.

<sup>42</sup> *Nation*, 26:316 (May 16, 1878); *Philadelphia Record*, May 11, 1878; *Patriot*, May 9, Nov. 7, 1878.

<sup>43</sup> *Washington Post*, Dec. 17, 24, 1877, May 10, 13, 25, 1878, Jan. 28, 1879; *New York Tribune*, Apr. 10, May 22, 23, 27, 28, June 8, 1878; *New York Times*, Jan. 28, 1879; *Washington Evening Star*, Dec. 16, 1878, Jan. 17, 1879.

<sup>44</sup> *Nation*, 28:75 (Jan. 30, 1879).

cures offered by the Greenback-Labor supporters, and considerable worry because of the amazing progress of that political group within the State. While Wright was ridiculed in every conceivable fashion, it is possible that even this type of publicity had a beneficial effect. Such agricultural periodicals as the *Prairie Farmer*, the *American Agriculturist*, the *Cultivator and Country Gentleman*, and the *Southern Cultivator* do not mention any of the three land-settlement bills under discussion. The absence of even a sentence dealing with these bills again suggests that they originated in the industrial centers and that their purpose was the amelioration of the laboring classes. As would be expected, the few labor papers in existence in 1878, such as the *Irish World*, the *Wilkes-Barre National Reformer*, and the *New York Advocate*, spoke vigorously for Government aid to population migration.

On January 27, 1879, Wright finally was allowed thirty minutes in which to deliver a speech in support of his measure,—the same speech which he had assured his son was fully prepared nearly a year before.<sup>45</sup> After an introductory explanation and some weighty observations on the importance of the subject, he supplied a vivid picture of the real distress of the unemployed and belligerently denied that these unfortunates deserved the appellation of "tramps" which had been tied to them for half a decade. Wright then reviewed the American tradition of plenty and voiced his willingness to work for subsidies for all instead of solely for corporations. He particularly resented the accusation that he was a communist and likewise made it clear that he despised the idea of agrarianism. He spoke as a representative of a manufacturing area and in praise of the industrial way of life.

Wright's words in explanation of the constitutionality of his proposal are significant, especially since, during the same decade, the "due process" clause was silently creeping over the country as the primary bulwark of property rights. He claimed that Congress had the power to pass his bill under the "general welfare" clause. This reasoning seems quite similar to that expounded in the majority opinion invalidating the Agricultural Adjustment Act in January 1936, in which the Supreme Court

<sup>45</sup> Wright to his son George, Mar. 25, 1878.

ruled that Congress has extensive powers to levy taxes for the general welfare, but declared that this particular New Deal measure did not provide for the general welfare. When asked by A. R. Boone of Kentucky under what provision he would justify an appropriation of money for this purpose, Wright replied:<sup>46</sup>

Upon the same principle upon which you would justify an appropriation to straighten the channel and course of the Mississippi—for the general welfare; upon the same principle the homestead act was passed; upon the same principle that you loaded our ships with corn to feed starving people in foreign lands; upon the same principle you would provide for those smitten with the plague; upon the same principle that this Government should protect the lives of its people; upon the same principle that the public health and the public prosperity demand the passage of such laws as may be necessary to preserve them. No constitutional barrier stands in the way of legislation by Congress in discharging its duty in the emergencies I have named.

This quotation reveals Wright as a charter member of that modern group of constitutional thinkers who seem to have adopted as their motto that famous watchword, "What's the constitution between friends."

S. S. Cox of New York came to Wright's assistance with the suggestion that Congress had the power "to dispose of and make all needful rules and regulations respecting the territory or other property belonging to the United States. If this can be used to give away land as homesteads and to railroads, why not for a great benevolent object and to relieve suffering labor?"<sup>47</sup> Wright agreed with this reasoning and then picked up the thread of his speech with the reminder that Benjamin Franklin had been the author of a similar land-settlement bill for the back counties of the English Province of Pennsylvania. After further expansion of his interpretation of the "general welfare" clause, Wright lectured the House on the steady progress of thought and opinion, citing the changed attitude towards emancipation and ended with the frank declaration that he did not suppose for a moment that the bill would pass, but merely wished to point the way for the future.

<sup>46</sup> *Congressional Record*, 45 Congress, 3 Session, Jan. 27, 1879, p. 770-772.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*



The author's prophecy of defeat for his bill was decidedly accurate, for the roll call at the conclusion of his speech recorded 23 yeas and 210 nays, with 55 not voting.<sup>48</sup> Wright was pleased with the personnel of the small company that arrayed itself on his side. He characterized this group, which included Cox of New York, Judge William R. Kelley of Pennsylvania, Butler of Massachusetts, Milton Salyer and Henry B. Banning of Ohio, Benjamin Wilson of West Virginia, Benjamin J. Franklin of Missouri, and eight members of the Democratic delegation from Pennsylvania, as "the Brains of the House."<sup>49</sup> Wright complained at the supposed refusal of the House to suspend the rules and consider his bill,<sup>50</sup> yet the *Congressional Record* shows that the rules had been suspended previous to his speech; thus the roll call was really a final vote on the measure.<sup>51</sup> His correspondents urged him to continue the fight, and he protested that he would "persevere against tremendous odds." Yet, he soon dropped all agitation for the bill and contented himself with various words of assurance from his friends, such as "pioneers must expect the ordeal of taunts and gibes. The value of your work is educational"; and "you will be appreciated by the next generation as the only man of his time who understands the nation's needs."<sup>52</sup>

With the defeat of Wright's proposal, it is possible to examine the question of whether such a bill was practical in 1879 and whether it would have offered any real solution for the difficulties of the industrial depression. While it is obvious that contemporary constitutional interpretation was a formidable obstacle, yet Butler's "military settlements" plan might very well have vanquished any legal protests. Furthermore, the fact that each of these land-settlement bills called for some form of currency inflation undoubtedly contributed to their failure, although inflationary sentiment was present in the Forty-fifth Congress as was demonstrated by the overriding of Hayes' veto of the Bland-

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Wright to his son George, Jan. 27, 1879.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> *Congressional Record*, 45 Congress, 3 Session, Jan. 27, 1879, p. 771.

<sup>52</sup> G. B. Roberts of Wilmington, Del., to Wright, Feb. 8, 1879; A. E. Sharpe of Houston, Tex., to Wright, Jan. 21, 1878.



Allison Silver Coinage Act within one hour after its return to Congress in February 1878. The tremendous difficulties in the administration of land-settlement projects are obvious, but Butler's bill was an intelligent attempt to meet them. The excellent performances of the Army Engineers in the 1930's in helping to launch various flood-control projects as well as administering the Civilian Conservation Corps would seem to substantiate Butler's expectations. Most of the correspondents of both Butler and Wright hoped to settle in Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, and Arkansas, but it is now known that nearly all of the suitable agricultural lands in this region were already in the hands of the railroads and speculators. Professor Gates' recent article on "The Homestead Law in an Incongruous Land System" clearly demonstrates this fact.<sup>53</sup> A casual perusal of the railroad advertisements in the agricultural periodicals of that day will convince the skeptical.

There is also serious doubt as to whether workers taken from industrial regions would have been able to farm profitably under the provisions of any of these bills. Even the \$1,250 allowed by Butler for an outfit and drawing account probably would not have been enough capital to guarantee success for city greenhorns in a region devoted to capitalistic farming. Expensive machinery was becoming more and more necessary for agricultural success in such States as Nebraska and Kansas.<sup>54</sup> The agricultural periodicals, especially the *Prairie Farmer* of Chicago, were continually extolling the virtues of the new harvesters, reapers, horserakes, and tandem plows. A western correspondent of the *Cultivator and Country Gentleman* warned against attempted

<sup>53</sup> P. W. Gates, "The Homestead Law in an Incongruous Land System," *American Historical Review*, 41:652-681 (July 1936). See also W. B. Hazen, "The Great Middle Region of the United States, and its Limited Space of Arable Land," *North American Review*, 120:1-34 (January 1875); and David A. Wells, "How Shall the Nation Regain Prosperity?," *North American Review*, 125:110-132 (July 1877), quoting Major J. W. Powell on p. 129; Nebraska correspondent, F. N. C[olwell], "Nebraska Notes," *Cultivator and Country Gentleman*, 43:180 (Mar. 21, 1878).

<sup>54</sup> *American Agriculturist*, 34:297 (August 1875); Henry St. Geier Young of Flandreau, Dakota Territory to Wright, Dec. 27, 1878.

settlement in this region without a minimum of \$1,000 which included railroad fare to the West.<sup>55</sup> The fluctuation of farm prices, the continued rate abuses of the railroads, and the frequent plagues of various species of bugs and grasshoppers all cast doubt on the probabilities of these transplanted mechanics' and miners' ability to keep up their payments on a Government loan. The experience of the railroad land companies with much abandoned land and many requests for credit extension, and the trials of the National Government with New Deal loaning agencies, suggest that a large portion of any Government loans to poverty-stricken settlers in 1879 would have been repaid very slowly and with much friction.

In spite of the faulty drafting of these land-settlement bills, their obvious impracticality, and their failure to receive consideration by Congress, the movement in support of them is not without significance. Many of the sources consulted contain interpretations of the roots of economic ills which appear in the economic philosophy of the New Deal. Some of the leaders, although usually classified as demagogues and quacks by contemporaries and also by many writers of history, were able to see through the mist of the politics of plunder and realistically point out the policies and practices which were contributing to depression. Butler's speech in the House on May 21, 1878, analysing the depression of 1873 is a brilliant example of this clear thinking.

Finally, the discussion of these proposed plans for National Government aid to agricultural settlement adds something to the growing literature on the so-called "safety-valve" theory.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>55</sup> *Cultivator and Country Gentleman*, 41:164-165 (Mar. 16, 1876).

<sup>56</sup> Carter Goodrich and Sol Davison, "Wage Earner in the Westward Movement," *Political Science Quarterly*, 50:161-185 (June 1935), 51:61-116 (March 1936); Murray Kane, "Some Considerations of the Safety Valve Doctrine," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 23:169-188 (September 1936); Joseph Schafer, "Some Facts Bearing on the Safety-Valve Theory," *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, 20:216-232 (December 1936), "Peopling the Middle West," *ibid.*, 21:85-106 (September 1937), "Concerning the Frontier as Safety Valve," *Political Science Quarterly*, 52:407-420 (September 1937), and "Was the West a Safety-Valve for Labor?," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 24:299-314 (December 1937); F. A.

Since this phrase has been used rather loosely, it is time that the term should be redefined. If the "safety-valve" theory means that America and the American West served as a refuge for European labor, much evidence appears to demonstrate the point. If this theory means that the existence of a large expanse of free land in the West served to draw off the surplus labor of the East, there is evidence to prove that some members of the industrial classes did go West and begin life anew. If it means that labor went West in sufficient numbers to influence the wage scale of industrial workers and thus their satisfaction with their lot, judgment on this point becomes largely a battle of statistics and skill in corraling enough "typical" illustrations. If the term means that even though few laborers went West, the stream was large enough to be a real factor in the employer-employee relationship in eastern industry because of the possibility of further labor migration, obviously such intangibles cannot be weighed. The fact that in the 1870's large numbers of stranded industrial workers were knocking at the doors of the United States Treasury asking for a loan of \$500 or more to enable them to move West seems to show that the valve on the machine which is called American economic life had stuck with the depression of 1873. However, it is possible that this request for financial assistance is a demonstration of contemporary knowledge of the necessity of purchasing considerable agricultural machinery before venturing into the West in the 1870's. The comments of the press and the letters of the petitioners make it very clear that a great many people were firmly convinced that the West had been a safety-valve before 1870 and would be again if the Government would only lend its credit to speed up a movement already in progress which promised to drain off the surplus labor of the industrial centers, give new settlers a chance to earn a

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Shannon, "The Homestead Act and the Labor Surplus," *American Historical Review*, 41:637-651 (July 1936). For earlier literature on the general theme, see Everett E. Edwards, "References on the Significance of the Frontier in American History," U. S. Department of Agriculture, Library, *Bibliographical Contributions* 25 (Washington, 1935).

living, and, above all else, to end unemployment, raise the scale of wages, and leave those workers who remained in the factories in a state of perfect contentment. This view may have been wishful thinking on the part of the supporters of these schemes, and it may have been mere delusion, yet such thoughts were in the minds of many and must be considered in evaluating the influences which molded American Life.

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## THE DEVELOPMENT OF AMERICAN RURAL FICTION

The development of American rural fiction has taken place within the twentieth century. Only three novels published before 1900 are now considered to be genuine studies of rural life. Moreover, the rural novels published during the first decade of the century were so few in number and usually so lacking in strength that the real development of farm-life fiction may be said to have had its beginning about 1910.

During most of the following decade these books came slowly. They had to be sought out by readers who were interested in them, for they had a silent reception. Toward the end of the decade, however, the movement was accelerated, and soon after 1920 the development was swift. Not only were farm novels published in rapidly increasing numbers but the stories began to show individual worth.

By 1925 the novels that drew from this new fruitful field were being recognized as constituting a definite school of American fiction, characterized by material rather than by method. Because of its fidelity to farm life and values, it was naturally associated with realism. By 1930 there was danger that the field would be exploited by superficial or unskilled writers who were attracted by its growing popularity. Now, as another decade nears its close, there is an occasional note of question as to whether this well-established movement is keeping pace with the swiftly changing developments surrounding American rural life.

Of the three novels of the last century, now known as forerunners of this movement, Hamlin Garland's *Main-Travelled Roads* (1891) has proved to be the most significant. Edward Eggleston's *Hoosier Schoolmaster* (1883) touched on limited phases of a country locality, and E. W. Howe's *Story of a Country Town* (1884) did not relate to farm life. Garland's book dealt with the rural migration from east to west, that affected the lives of

thousands of families, not only those who migrated but those who staid at home. Although he did not realize or suggest all that the movement implied in the way of profound social and economic changes, he did catch and transmit a suggestion of it in a realistic rather than a romantic way.

Moreover, Garland eventually followed through with other books that helped to form the main marching force of this new movement, although this first sortie into farm fields for fictional material met only with discouragement. In his later books he told how skeptical were his entrenched author-advisers in the East as to the possibility of using such material successfully in fiction. Even William Dean Howells, considered daring in his ventures toward realism, said that it could not be done, and Garland's contemporaries in the Midwest were dubious.

Surveying the movement from this distance, it seems to have really gotten under way about 1915 when Willa Cather began to publish her novels. More fortunate in her advisers than Garland, she explained in the preface of the 1922 edition of her first book, *Alexander's Bridge* (1912), that she showed this story of the East and England and Canada to Sarah Orne Jewett who was concentrating on simple direct sketches of her own State of Maine. Miss Jewett told her that this kind of story was all very well but that sooner or later she would do her best work with the scenes, characters, and life that she knew best—those of the farms of the Middle West.

Sarah Orne Jewett touched the right spot. Years later, when the preface of 1922 was written, every book that Willa Cather had published was rooted in the Middle West, even though the story might carry the Nebraska boy or girl to war overseas or on the far travels of a successful singer. Almost regularly they had come. Once she had tapped this wellspring, its waters flowed fresh, clear, and even, regardless of the season. *O Pioneers*, a story of faith in the land, foresight, unremitting effort, human understanding, and late hard-won achievement, was published in 1913; *The Song of the Lark*, in which a farm-bred girl, through farm-fed determination won through to recognition, in 1915; *My Ántonia*, the first rural novel to be recognized by discriminat-



ing critics as one of the best of American novels, in 1918; and *One of Ours*, taking a farm boy through adolescence and the World War, came in 1922. Perhaps because they were written when there was no demand for such books, when only a few isolated readers were interested in them or recognized their worth, and when their writing could have been only the loyal working out of conviction, they are still among the best of American rural fiction. They are the classics of the school. In later volumes,—*A Lost Lady* (1923), *The Professor's House* (1925), *Death Comes for the Archbishop* (1927), and *Shadows on the Rock* (1931),—Willa Cather used wider or older rural themes. Never yet has she used an urban subject for a book. Her later work shows greater penetration in analysis, sharper subtlety, and brilliancy in style, but for comprehension of character and recognition of values and power to bring them to the light, her first books still stand at the forefront.

Other farm-life novels appeared from time to time during these earlier years. Whether good or indifferent they were welcomed by those who were especially interested in bringing attention to the neglected theme of farms and farm life with its potentialities and its restrictions. Not many were good. Of those that were published before 1920, only two or three are still readily found on the shelves. Mrs. Dell H. Munger's *Wind Before the Dawn* (1912), and Sarah Comstock's *The Soddy* (1912), and possibly a few others, demonstrated to writers and the general public the fiction-making content of rural material, but they have not endured in their own right. That the theme should be used generally in an artistic, interpretive way seemed at that time too much to expect.

The beginning of a new decade revealed a quickened interest in farm-life fiction and improvement in its craftsmanship. Suddenly it began to be recognized and even rewarded. Farm-life writers were spurred on in their work, and other writers came into the movement in rapid succession bringing questionable gifts. Its supporters grew apprehensive, believing that a fad for this fiction might be as disastrous as a land boom for agriculture. The popularity of the rural theme was attracting writers of all

kinds,—some were in deadly earnest but not experienced in writing, and others were facile writers with no experience in farm life, who wanted to cash in while the current interest was high.

For readers of *Agricultural History* it is unnecessary to trace the awakening to the influence of the frontier and the materialization of the national spirit. Recorded first by Frederick Jackson Turner, they are now evident in the development of all the arts. They were shaped, encouraged, and exemplified by Harriet Monroe in poetry, Hamlin Garland in fiction, Stuart Sherman in criticism, Lorado Taft in sculpture, Frank Lloyd Wright in architecture, Jens Jensen in landscape architecture, and a few other adventurous spirits in the Middle West. Here and there Midwestern citizens found a chance to turn to thought rather than action. Moreover, the universities and other cultural centers attracted men and women whose work had previously reflected an Eastern or European point of view but who later developed a wider horizon, a refreshed viewpoint, and a new interpretation. All this gave a healthy impetus to rural fiction. It strengthened truthfulness and encouraged finished work.

During the 1920's, the Eastern magazines began to draw their editors from the West. Glenn Frank was called to the *Century*, and after his resignation, Charles P. Howland was made editor. *Harper's* called Thomas Wells, and the New York *Herald-Tribune* sent for Stuart Sherman to make its literary supplement.

It was some time before this turning toward the West as a source of dependable artistic material and workers was realized by the public. The lag in realization may have meant better work in the field of rural fiction, and it may have been one influence that held rural fiction to its true course during the decade in spite of the influx of contributors.

Middle Western novels were far ahead in number and usually in quality, although there were exceptions. Pioneer stories naturally predominated. Willa Cather's were chiefly of that nature. Then came others like Margaret Wilson's *Able McLaughlins* (1923), Glenway Wescott's *Grandmothers* (1927), Bess Streeter Aldrich's *Lantern in Her Hand* (1928), and Cornelia James Cannon's *Red Rust* (1928). Others, in series of books,

carried their characters and themes beyond the pioneer era. Herbert Quick's *Vandemark's Folly* (1922) is a story of the taking up of land and the making of farms; *The Hawkeye* (1923) relates to the making of these farms into a community; and *The Invisible Woman* (1924) tells of the resultant State in the grip of the corporations that can make or unmake it. His series finds Iowa a distant frontier section struggling with the problems of isolation. It leaves Iowa an empire midway between the boundaries of the Nation struggling with the problems of an industrialized civilization.

O. E. Rølvaag opened his trilogy with one of the greatest of rural novels,—a book that stands among the best of American novels generally. *Giants in the Earth*, translated from the Norwegian in 1927, perpetuates the story of the Norwegian emigration, the crossing of ocean and land, and the making of farms and rural communities. The sweep of the whole vast movement is suggested between the covers of one book. *Peder Victorious* (1929) recounts the conflict between generations of the immigrant family, and *Their Father's God* (1931) reflects the conflict among the faiths of the synthetic community. The loss in power as the story progresses indicates the loss in human stamina as the problems of the frontier decrease in challenge to vitality.

It was during this decade that Hamlin Garland published his *Middle Border* series, classified sometimes as fiction and sometimes as biography,—*A Son of the Middle Border* (1917), *A Daughter of the Middle Border* (1921), *Trail-Makers of the Middle Border* (1926), and *Back-Trailers from the Middle Border* (1928). This series, too, traced the success and then the decline of the determination and enthusiasm of two pioneer strains, as the artistic impulse sent the later generations back toward publishers rather than forward toward new materials.

These saga-like series, with their connotations of stability and continuity in farm life, in themselves suggested the maturity that had been reached in farm-life fiction. Quick's works came with the decade, Garland's had punctuated it throughout, and Rølvaag's marked the turning into the next decade. Together they characterize the outstanding era in the development of rural

fiction. It was in this decade also that John T. Frederick in his *Green Bush* (1925) expressed the philosophy of country life as concretely as can be found in fiction.

The Middle West did not hold a monopoly on the rural novels of the 1920's. The first English edition of Louis Hémon's *Marie Chapdelaine* (1916), a crystalline story of French-Canadian pioneer life, appeared in 1921. Dorothy Scarborough contributed an occasional volume from Texas, and here and there a book was published by an obscure author. Then, in 1925, Ellen Glasgow turned from her brilliant fictional commentaries on Southern life, and in *Barren Ground* built up a forthright character who, when disappointed in the traditional ways for women, turned to the land and wrung from life, through her determination and the work of her hands, a victory with natural forces, plus a victory of self and spirit that transcends material advancement. Dorinda stands with Antonia as a memorable character in American fiction.

The next year, a new Southern writer, Elizabeth Madox Roberts unfolded a story of tenancy in her *Time of Man* (1926) with such finished workmanship that she became at once a national figure in fiction. That was followed by Louis Bromfield's *Early Autumn* (1926) in which he touched on New England's loss as its sons moved westward.

Prize awards during this decade stimulated farm-life fiction. The original wording of the Pulitzer novel award to go to the American novel "that shall best present the wholesome atmosphere of American life and the highest standards of American manners and manhood" forced the committee to turn frequently to rural writers. The award in 1923 went to Willa Cather for *One of Ours*; in 1924, to Margaret Wilson for *The Able McLaughlins*; in 1925, to Edna Ferber for *So Big*; and in 1927, to Louis Bromfield for *Early Autumn*.

A review of the arguments against the practice of awarding prizes for literature is 'not needed here. Those who had been reading Willa Cather's books as they appeared considered her earlier stories finer than *One of Ours*. Now that point is freely conceded, but her work was not generally known until the prize

turned the spotlight on it. After that her books were in demand as never before. Prize awards do mean more readers for good books.

The decade of the 1930's has been marked by a deflection from the typical pioneer story of the Middle West. Regionalism has triumphed. Rural novels, if true, are now essentially regionalized. Other areas and other eras have come to life in farm-life fiction. In a recent year every region and nearly every State served as a background for at least one rural novel. The volumes varied in quality, but they formed a fresh and expanded pattern for the year. Although the emphasis on character usually persists, and description is frequent, the interpretation of other phases is no longer neglected.

Two kinds of rural novels, both related to the general trends in fiction, have predominated. The family chronicle, much in demand of late, is particularly fitted to rural themes. Many of these rural books have carried the generations of one family through the economic and social changes of their localities. Another kind has made rural life emphatically realistic, whether dealing with internals or externals, as American literature in general has become increasingly hard-boiled.

Certain of the books of this decade have illuminated specific rural problems as they affected the daily lives of the people. Cornelia James Cannon, after watching the melting pot in action as she grew up in Minnesota, wrote *Red Rust* (1928). After living in Massachusetts for a few years she wrote *Heirs* (1935), which deals with the changing racial population in rural New England,—what it first meant to the old families and what it may mean in rejuvenation. She touched on the changing agriculture of New Hampshire and the sterility of some of the old family lines in a way that was apparently acceptable to New England. Then Sinclair Lewis pointed to the change in population elements as a new field, and Edna Ferber, who had already published a prize-winner about an Illinois farm woman in *So Big* (1924), took the dare by writing *American Beauty* (1931). However, her prompt story of the consequences of change in the old families



and homes brought protests of superficiality from New England readers.

Tales of successive generations disclose naturally the outcome of fluctuations and cycles. Several of the best of these stories are centered in Maine and in the dramatic history of its coast. Mary Ellen Chase, in *Mary Peters* (1934) and *Silas Crockett* (1935), has told the story, even to footnotes, from the years of the clipper ships down through the elimination of coastwise vessels and the reluctant turning to the fisheries for a living. Rachel Field enriched the same theme in *Time Out of Mind* (1935), and Robert P. Tristram Coffin used it in *Red Sky in the Morning* (1935) and *John Dawn* (1936). In one of these volumes the loss of income and power brings degradation, but Gladys Hasty Carroll in *As the Earth Turns* (1933) and *A Few Foolish Ones* (1935) showed that disintegration of a community can serve to strengthen individual integrities.

Prizes have continued to spur rural writers. At the turn of the decade the wording of the Pulitzer award was modified by the influence of regionalism, but it continued to go to country stories: in 1929, to Julia Peterkin for *Scarlet Sister Mary*; in 1930, to Oliver LaFarge for *Laughing Boy*; in 1932, to Pearl Buck for *The Good Earth*; in 1934, to Caroline Miller for *Lamb in His Bosom*; in 1935, to Josephine Johnson for *Now in November*; and in 1936, to H. L. Davis for *Honey in the Horn*.

Publishers' awards have flourished in this decade. In some instances a Pulitzer prize has duplicated a publisher's prize as in the case of Margaret Wilson's *Able McLaughlins* and H. L. Davis's *Honey in the Horn*. Other publishers' honors have gone to Glenway Wescott's *Grandmothers*, the story of his Wisconsin forebears, to Edwin P. O'Donnell's regionalized and individual *Green Margins* (1936) and to Margaret Flint's *The Old Ashburn Place* (1936). The annual Prix Femina Americain, new in this decade, and given to the book that, in the opinion of the committee, best expresses the spirit and character of America, has been awarded to *Shadows on the Rock*, *Lamb in His Bosom*, and Naomi Lane Babson's *Yankee Bodleys* (1936). It is this excess of prizes, merely outlined here, that has disconcerted the sup-



porters of farm-life fiction who wished for it a normal and stable development.

The striking series of this decade of rural fiction is characteristic of the present tendencies in all fiction. Vardis Fisher, in his autobiographical tetralogy—*In Tragic Life* (1932), *Passions Spin the Plot* (1934), *We Are Betrayed* (1935), and *No Villain Need Be* (1936)—wrote an almost brutal story of the impact of a rude pioneer neighborhood and people on an impressionable boy and its conditioning of his adolescence and manhood, although he moved to urban surroundings. The series is not unlike the better known life-story begun by Thomas Wolfe, but it is more coherently planned and has been executed with dispatch. Fisher had been among the first to publish novels in which the pioneering characters were so rough as to be hardly respectable by Eastern standards. *Toilers of the Hills* (1928) and *Dark Bridwell* (1931) are located in the frontier Snake River country of Idaho. At the turn of the decade he seemed an iconoclast. The American people must have suspected otherwise, but they preferred to think of the pioneers as noble men and women bent on developing the country for the sake of the Nation alone.

Since that time others have begun to work realistically with the average pioneers. Mari Sandoz applied no varnish to the picture of her frontier father in the prize-winning *Old Jules* (1935), nor did H. L. Davis in his double-prize-winning story of recent frontier days in Oregon, *Honey in the Horn* (1935), nor John Steinbeck in *Of Mice and Men* (1937).

Thus the criticism occasionally heard, that rural fiction is sentimental and is not tackling hard country problems, is not justified. It is true of some of the books, but one segment of rural fiction is facing inexorable fact as directly as are other classes of fiction. Review boards, prize-award committees, and publishers know this to be true. The first volume of Fisher's tetralogy was refused by Eastern publishers as being "too strong meat for our readers." They had published his earlier novels, but *In Tragic Life* was not for them, although they said they recognized its power. A publishing house in Idaho dared to do it. A few critics pronounced it one of the powerful books of the year,

equal to some of the best writing of the newer group of authors. When the next volumes of the series were completed, Eastern publishers were ready for them. An Eastern concern joined with the Western house in bringing out the subsequent parts of the serial and also reprinted the first volume.

Proletarian novels, now so frequent in publishers' lists, are found among the rural books. Josephine Johnson, inseparably linked with rural fiction through the Pulitzer prize-winner, *Now in November* (1934), moved her scene to the small town when she wrote *Jordanstown* (1937), but John Steinbeck's story of migrant farm labor, *Of Mice and Men*, takes place in the open country. Land problems furnish the theme of several recent books—Paul Green's *This Body the Earth* (1935) and H. H. Kroll's *I Was a Share Cropper* (1937) are leading examples. In *The Tree Falls South* (1937), Wellington Roe dramatized in a legitimate way the drought and depression in the dust bowl and the farmers' fight against the loss of their farms.

In the twenty or thirty years of its development American rural fiction has weathered discouragement, obscurity, and neglect. It has survived precocious prize-taking, popularity, and praise. Years ago it reached the stage where its supporters demanded as much of these books as of any other school of fiction, not only in characterization and description but in insight, revelation, and craftsmanship. It has brought the American past and ways of growth or deterioration clearly before us and interpreted them in everyday terms. It is now wrestling with the disasters and challenges of a new era in farm life as few other kinds of books are doing. These subjects are too raw as yet to be readily moulded into esthetic forms, but rural novelists are determined to succeed. Thus farm-life fiction serves the past, the present, and the future.

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## PLANTATIONS WITH SLAVE LABOR AND FREE<sup>1</sup>

It has been my fortune within recent months to visit an establishment comprising 9,000 acres of delta land in cultivation. The great levees which guard it from flood border not the Mississippi but the Sacramento and Mokelumne rivers. A hoe gang in which I counted thirty-nine laborers, working straight abreast, each upon a furrow a measured mile in length, comprised not Negroes, but Hindus, Sicilians, Mexicans, and men of yet other stocks. The crops was not sugar cane, rice, or cotton, but sugar beets. The place is called a ranch, not a plantation,—but that is the fashion in California.

The laborers whether at hoe or plow included no women or children (this was not a Japanese enterprise!). There were no cottages, except those of the foremen, whether clustered at ranch headquarters or scattered about the fields, but bunk houses instead. Until two years ago many of the laborers had families on the place; but the management, finding that women made for strife, changed the régime to the present stag basis. Wages of plowmen are \$3.50 per day and board, which is reckoned to cost \$1.50 additional. The hoeing and harvest are not financed directly by the ranch management but are let to Italian contractors at \$50 per acre for the season; and the contractors employ, feed, and bunk their own hands, paying them such wages as the market may require. Harvest comprises merely the pulling, topping, and loading of the beets, since the ranch does not convert its crop into sugar. The hoe hands depart at the season's end; some of the plowmen remain.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> An address before the dinner of the Agricultural History Society with the American Historical Association at Richmond, Virginia, on December 27, 1924. Originally printed with the same title in the *American Historical Review*, 30: 738-753 (July 1925), the address is here reprinted with the permission of the editor and of Mrs. U. B. Phillips.

<sup>2</sup> Alfalfa, asparagus (800 acres in this), and fruits are minor crops on the ranch. Virtually nothing consumed by the personnel on the place is produced upon it. Even the butter is brought each week from San Francisco.

Apart from the families of the manager and foremen, and except for the cooks and "matrons" of the bunk houses, the ranch is a womanless world. As such it would seem to be fairly representative of California large-scale farming, if the hundreds of migratory laborers whom the tourist encounters are an index—weather-beaten men with bedding rolls over their shoulders, trudging the highways or the railroad tracks, shifting from fields to vineyards, from orange and lemon groves to walnuts and olives, from plums and peaches to prunes and pears, almost literally from figs to thistles, since burr artichokes are but the unblown blossoms of highly educated thistle plants!

In the region of Kansas and Colorado, likewise, there are huge tracts devoted to sugar beets and other crops, owned by corporations and cultivated in large part by a shifting personnel. Along both flanks of the Rocky Mountains, furthermore, every "dirt farmer" seeds many more acres in small grain than he can hope to harvest alone. The migratory laborers move from the San Joaquin to the Kootenay or from the Red River of the South to its namesake of the North on a schedule of the ripening wheat. Widely in the West, and considerably indeed in more easterly regions, the farmers and their families do by no means all the work of their farm, but depend essentially upon employees in considerable volume.

In all the foregoing there are suggestions of the plantation system. Sugar beets among Western crops invite the closest approach to the classic plantation type, essentially because they require continuous cultivation through a fairly long growing season, and they must be worked with hoe as well as plow. The cultivation, indeed, is much like that of cotton, for the seed are drilled thickly in the furrow, the seedlings are thinned by chopping, and the plants which remain are set too closely to permit of crossplowing. In other respects the western régime is in sharp contrast to that of the South, whether past or present—most notably in its heavy turnover of labor and its lack of domesticity.

The slave-plantation régime owed its origins, curiously, to conditions in which Negroes figured little. In the Spanish West Indies, on the one hand, the first agglomerations of labor were of conscripted aborigines; and in early Virginia they were of white

indentured servants. In either case the degree of domesticity was presumably small, and the turnover was rather large; for the coerced Indians died with disconcerting speed, and the indentured whites went their several ways when their terms expired—if haply they did not die or escape in advance. It was in large part to diminish this turnover that recourse was had to Guinea, a country discovered half a century before America, whose deported natives had promptly been adjudged in Europe “very loyal and obedient servants, without malice”, who “never more tried to fly, but rather in time forgot all about their own country”.<sup>3</sup> Their sturdiness of physique and their amiability of temper led eventually to the replacement of virtually all other sorts of massed labor by Negroes wherever the work was of simple routine character, and to the development of slavery as a scheme for their industrial and social control. Thus in the production of tobacco, rice, cotton, and cane sugar Negro slave labor came to have no rival except that of white yeomen upon their own small farms.

By this recourse to Negroes in slavery, the turnover was almost wholly eliminated except as involved in the flight, the sale, or the death of slaves, and the death or bankruptcy of masters. From year to year overseers, where there were such, constituted as a rule the only changing personnel on the plantations. Now this absence of turnover, this lifetime adjustment, this permanent proprietorship of labor, created problems, conditions, and an atmosphere of its own. In the first place it made labor inelastic. The same force must be fed, clothed, and sheltered the year round, and must be kept from unproductive idleness. Even when slaves were hired, the standard unit was a year's service. This meant an inescapable problem of flattening the peaks and filling the troughs in the curve of the labor demand. A planter's maxim was: “The ways of industry are constant and regular, not to be in a hurry at one time and do nothing at another, but to be always usefully and steadily employed.”<sup>4</sup> The solution was easy in the West

<sup>3</sup> Gomes Eannes de Azurara, “The Chronicle of the Discovery and Conquest of Guinea,” Hakluyt Society, *Works*, 95:85 (London, 1896).

<sup>4</sup> U. B. Phillips, ed., “Plantation and Frontier,” *A Documentary History of American Industrial Society*, 1:109 (Cleveland, 1910).



Indies, where the tropical climate gave leeway at all seasons. In continental crops, peaks were inevitable, particularly in the sugar-cane harvest to escape frost, in the transplanting of tobacco, and in the picking of cotton.<sup>5</sup> The contemplation of these peaks controlled the planning for the year. Just so much land was assigned to the staple as it was reckoned the force could cover at peak tasks. The troughs were slight in cotton and sugar cane, for the planters' adage that these crops required thirteen months in the year had considerable substance. It meant, of course, that preparation for a new crop ought to begin before the old harvest was done and that the work when once begun was fairly continuous. Periods "out of crop" as regards the staple were filled in part by auxiliary crops, notably Indian corn, and in part by the clearing of new grounds, the cutting and hauling of fuel, and varied jobs of renovation.

Furthermore every parcel of slaves comprised some who at some periods or at all times were not fit for field work or were too valuable to be employed therein. Blacksmithing, shoemaking, spinning, weaving, nursing, as well as domestic service, were available for these, in furtherance of the policy of making each plantation self-sufficient in every expedient regard.

Segregation was accepted as necessary, and self-containment was promoted as highly desirable. Matings among the slaves were encouraged within the plantation group, though not strictly confined within its limits. The planter expected his future laborers in the main to be born, reared, and trained on the place.

<sup>5</sup> In the eight or ten weeks of the "grinding season" in Louisiana, the peak was so pronounced that overtime work, on Sundays in the field and both at night and on Sundays in the mill, was of common recourse. In the other staples overtime was quite unusual. The following illustrative items are from the diary of William Bolling of Bolling Hall, Goochland County, Virginia, the manuscript of which for 1827 and 1828 is on deposit with the Virginia Historical Society. The special occasion in each instance was the occurrence of rain, for wet ground was required for transplanting the tobacco seedlings, and moist air was essential for striking and prizing (*i.e.*, packing) the cured crop.

1828, Apr. 5. "Striking tob'o finished about 1 o'clock this morning. Rain commenced last ev'g, which bro't it rapidly in order. I had a supper cook'd for my people, sent them whiskey and a lanthorn with candles to the prize house,—and thus we have struck our whole crop in the last three days from one season [*i.e.*, rain], which was very favourable."

1828, June 9, a rainy Sunday. "My people all engaged in planting tob'o. a



His obvious method was to promote family life among the slaves, and to insure the care of children. Here his wife had special functions. The master's household gave lessons to the slaves, whether by precept or example, and the playtime intermingling of white and black children contributed a positive link of domestic interrelation. The plantation was not merely a seat of industry, but was permanently and potently a homestead.

There was perpetual need of adjustment and readjustment, conciliation, stimulus, and control. Negro slave labor tended to be slothful, because the Negroes were slaves, and also because the slaves were Negroes, imperfectly habituated to a civilized régime. Various devices by way of appeal, reward, or other inducement were utilized in efforts to increase the zeal, energy, and initiative of the laborers; but achievement by the planter was always limited by the quality of the children whom his women chanced to bear, by the inertia implied in slave status, and by any deficit in the vigor and finesse of the management. The greater the scale of a plantation and the greater the variety of its undertakings, the greater was the task of administration. The sagacious overseer of a great plantation reported to his employer in 1827: "I killed twenty-eight head of beef for the people's Christmas dinner. I can do more with them in this way than if all the hides of the cattle were made into lashes." And again in the following year: "You justly observe that if punishment is in one hand, reward should be in the other."<sup>6</sup> The ideal in slave control

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thing I rarely do [*i.e.*, Sunday work], but compelled on this occasion by the scarcity of plants, not to miss an opportunity so late in the season."

1828, July 5, Saturday. "Gave my people here a holiday in compensation for their work in planting tob'o on Sunday last."

For the wheat harvest in Virginia, extra hands were procured on hire. Examples of this are in Bolling's diary under dates of June 13, June 15, and July 7, 1828, and in *The Westover Journal of John A. Selden, esqr., 1858-1862* (printed with an introduction and notes by John Spencer Bassett in the *Smith College Studies in History*, v. 6, no. 4, July 1921) under dates of July 21, Aug. 11, and Aug. 19, 1858, June 30 and July 22, 1859, and July 20, 1861. After his wheat harvest of 1859, Selden gave his slaves a holiday; but needing some work done, he hired five of them, at seventy-five cents each, to glean and plow that day (entries of July 2 and 3, 1859). Westover was typical of tidewater Virginia plantations in this period in producing no tobacco, but using wheat as its chief crop.

<sup>6</sup> Frances Butler Leigh, *Ten Years on a Georgia Plantation*, 233 (London, 1883).

may perhaps be symbolized by an iron hand in a velvet glove. Sometimes the velvet was lacking, but sometimes the iron. Failure was not far to seek in either case.

Upon prosperous plantations there was wide variety in the details of regulation, with definite system the tendency on large units but with blurred schedules on the small. This may be illustrated from a parcel of six affidavits made by as many Georgia planters in 1853, whose slaves ranged in number from as many as 450 to as few as 16.<sup>7</sup> The six coincided as regards hours of work by the slaves (from dawn to sunset, with some two hours of rest at noon). They substantially agreed also as to the issue of clothing (two outfits each year) and as to the age (ten or twelve years) at which young slaves began field work. The five largest plantations allowed childbearing women a month as a minimum of leisure after confinement: upon this the sixth did not report. The four largest had schedules for mothers to leave the field to suckle their children; but the owner of forty gave his women full discretion and "free permission to leave their work for this purpose". Here again the owner of sixteen was silent. The largest proprietor had a yearly contract with a physician providing for twice-a-week visits at a minimum. The owner of 150 also reported a contract with a physician, but did not specify any visiting schedule. As to children he wrote: "I think we have lost one child in every four during sickness—caused generally by carelessness of the mothers. Since the adoption of my plan of a nursery, few die after being weaned, compared to what died formerly, probably not more than one a year on the average—one or two." All reported, with statistics, very large proportions of children in the numbers of their slaves; and the owner of 65 said as to births: "In connection with this subject, I may remark that eleven years after the death of my father, the slaves that I inherited from him had more than doubled."

<sup>7</sup> These affidavits, which were made in response to a questionnaire issued by Judge Ebenezer Starnes of the Georgia superior court, in pursuit of an inquiry which was mainly concerned with questions of criminality, are printed in *The Slaveholder Abroad . . . A Series of Letters from Dr. Pleasant Jones to Major Joseph Jones, of Georgia* (Philadelphia, 1860), 492-504. Leonard L. Mackall of Savannah has ascertained that Judge Starnes was himself the author of this book.

The fifth one of these documents is perhaps the most interesting of the group. It reads in part:

I have sixteen negro slaves—five males that are field-hands, and three women—two of them child-bearing, the other aged; and there are eight children, under ten years old. We give them as much food as they want and can eat, treating them as the white family in this respect—their food being prepared for them by the same cook which prepares the meals for the family. . . . I cannot give the quantity in pounds, for we don't allowance.

This was in contrast with the practice of the other five planters, each of whom had a fairly definite schedule of rations. The owner of 16 continued, as to children: "When they are not under the care of the mother, they are taken to the yard, and cared for by the cook." And as to medical service: "I have never needed a physician for my negroes—indeed, I never needed a physician for my whites until last fall. I would send for a physician for my slaves under the same circumstances as for my white family."

It is regrettable that data descriptive of small plantations and farms are very scant. Such documents as exist point unmistakably to informality of control and intimacy of white and black personnel on such units. This is highly important in its bearing upon race relations, for according to the Census of 1860, for example, one-fourth of all the slaves in the United States were held in parcels of less than ten slaves each, and nearly another fourth in parcels of ten to twenty slaves.<sup>8</sup> This means that about one half of the slaves had a distinct facilitation in obtaining an appreciable share in the social heritage of their masters. *Per contra*, it should be observed that the small proprietors were not generally of the most cultured class of society. The larger planters were as a rule the better educated, nicer in speech, more polished in manner, more urbane and refined. While their domestic servants in many cases possessed and notably improved an opportunity for procuring gentle breeding, the crowds of field Negroes were left very much to their own crude devices in a cultural sense.

<sup>8</sup> U. S. Census Office, *Eighth Census*, 1860, 3:247. The statistics for Arkansas in this table are obviously wrong; the true numbers for that commonwealth may be found on p. 224. On p. 248 of the same volume is a table of slaveholdings in 1850.

Nevertheless, the very fact that the Negroes were slaves linked them as a whole more closely to the whites than any scheme of wage labor could well have done.

Lifelong adjustment and the prospect of it brought habituation and accommodation. John Randolph, it is true, wrote in 1814: "My plantation affairs, always irksome, are now revolting,"<sup>9</sup> and Thomas Ruffin wrote of his wife: "she has been unable to reconcile herself to the particular place we are at or to vocations that unavoidably engage the attention of the master and mistress of slaves on a large plantation."<sup>10</sup> The careers and predilections of these two had made them devoid of the traits necessary and standard in plantation life: the faculty of unruffled response to the multitudinous calls of slaves upon the attention, and the tolerance of slack service. The roses, real or fancied, in the planter's bed made most folk ignore the thorns. A keen observer said with little exaggeration: "A plantation well stocked with hands is the *ne plus ultra* of every man's ambition who resides at the south."<sup>11</sup> The planters themselves, as a rule, relished and even exalted their calling. As one of them put it, with a bit of bombast: "Planting . . . in this country is the only independent and really honorable occupation. . . . The planters here are essentially what the nobility are in other countries."<sup>12</sup> Now this exaltation was greatly to the advantage of the slaves. The grandiloquence was based upon genuine self-respect, of which an essential ingredient is respect for others. Severity, even brutality, was not absent from the régime; but the "lords of the lash," while depending upon the lash in last resort, were certainly among "the mildest mannered men that ever scuttled ship or cut a throat."

To speak more soberly, the consciousness of power, together

<sup>9</sup> H. A. Garland, *Life of John Randolph*, 2:42 (New York, 1850), quoted in Gamaliel Bradford, *Damaged Souls*, 140 (Boston and New York, 1922). The sentence which follows in Randolph's letter, which Bradford failed to quote, blunts the point of this indictment: "I have lost three-fourths of the finest and largest crop I ever had."

<sup>10</sup> J. G. de R. Hamilton, ed., *The Papers of Thomas Ruffin*, 2:153 (Raleigh, N. C., 1918).

<sup>11</sup> [J. H. Ingraham], *The South-west*, 2:84 (New York, 1835).

<sup>12</sup> James H. Hammond, quoted in Elizabeth Merritt, *James Henry Hammond, 1807-1864*, p. 43 (Baltimore, 1923).

with a sense of gentility, promoted toleration and self-restraint. This was well discussed by the writer of an essay packed with sagacious analysis in the *American Quarterly Review* for 1827, who is regrettably anonymous. He said:

The high sense of personal dignity with which the habit of authority and command inspires him [the slaveholder], makes him courteous in his manners, liberal in his sentiments, generous in his actions. But, with his disdain of all that is coarse, and little, and mean, there often mingle the failings of a too sensitive pride; jealousy of all superiority; impatience of contradiction; quick and violent resentment. His liability to these vices is so obvious, that it is often an especial purpose of early instruction to guard against them; and thus is formed in happy natures, such a habit of self-command and virtuous discipline, as to make them remarkable for their mildness and moderation. . . . Mr. Jefferson, who has given so lively a description of the effects of slavery on the temper of the slaveholder, and whose views are so just in the general, was himself a remarkable exception to the unamiable picture which he has drawn.<sup>13</sup>

Plantation industry was the "big business" of colonial and antebellum times. It had a certain rigidity of regimentation due to the racial factor and to the slave status of the laborers. But as a rule it was free from the absenteeism of proprietorship and the consequent impersonality which regrettably prevail in the modern factory régime. The plantation system was not essentially static. Surely not in a territorial sense. Small-scale pioneers made the first clearings in the wilderness, but the planters followed close on their heels and consolidated the gains. A proof of their quickness and thoroughness in exploiting their opportunity lies in the population map of the United States, of even the present time. Everywhere east of Texas the best cotton districts are peopled by a majority of Negroes today, because within the space of threescore years and seven from the invention of the gin, planters had carried slaves in predominant numbers to all these districts and had maintained market inducements causing slave traders to supplement the effects of their own migration. In the same period they placed the American cotton belt in an unchallenged primacy in the world's production of the staple. Texas was marked as the one remaining province of prospective conquest. A planter migrating thither in 1846 remarked to a fellow

<sup>13</sup> *American Quarterly Review*, 2:251-252 (September 1827).



traveller "that he had been eaten out of Alabama by his negroes."<sup>14</sup> Competition was very keen among the planters, and the very scale of their concerns made them the more sensitive to the need of moving. And yet a multitude avoided the necessity.

It has been charged repeatedly by writers whose opinions are in general worthy of respect that the plantation system devoured the soil, while the farming system did not. This may frankly be challenged. The lands of the South, which of course were nowhere glaciated, fall into three main classes: that of virtually no soil, that of shallow soil, and that of deep soil. The first comprises large tracts in the coastal plain so sandy as to support no indigenous vegetation but pine trees and wire grass. The second consists mainly of the piedmont, where the clay, though lean in plant food, supported hardwood forests, which in turn overlaid the land with a thin stratum of leaf mold. The third comprised alluvial strips (notably the "Mississippi bottoms") and scattered limestone tracts and loess areas. Now no one who could pay any price for farm land would dally with the pine barrens before the introduction of commercial fertilizers. Certainly the planters avoided them with one accord. At the other extreme, the alluvial tracts were occupied by planters from the beginning, with little participation by farmers—partly because the problem of flood control put a premium upon large-scale undertakings. It was only in the region of shallow soil that sharp competition between the types occurred. This was entered upon by planters and farmers alike, eager to exploit such resources as it offered. Its limited supply of plant food might possibly be husbanded for a time by rotation of crops; but where the surface was sloping, as nearly everywhere it was, the run-off of the heavy Southern rains quickly washed the surface away except where the rush of water was checked by special devices—horizontal furrows, hillside ditches, and grass balks which by catching the flow gradually terraced the hills. When once the leaf mold was gone, which was but a question of time, there was a deficit of humus to hold moisture against times of drought. The absence of deep

<sup>14</sup> Sir Charles Lyell, *A Second Visit to the United States of North America*, 2:109 (ed. 2. London, 1850).

frost in winter meant a lack of loosening by thaw in spring. In short, while the climate was good for cotton, the soil was not long very good for anything.

Now, so long as population was sparse and in consequence land was "dirt cheap," shallow soil was regarded, though regretfully, as a consumable commodity. Under economic circumstances but one remove from frontier conditions, the sacrifice of the forests was little less inevitable than the exhaustion of the soil which the forests had made. In earning a livelihood planters and farmers were in competition, each growing cotton to the top of his bent and each tempted to sell his soil in the form of lint and then move on whither fresh forests might be felled.<sup>15</sup> Statistical evidence is available that the planters resisted this temptation distinctly more than did the farmers. In Oglethorpe County, for example, which is typical of the Georgia piedmont, the white population was nearly stationary from 1800 to 1820 at something less than 7,000 souls. Thereafter it steadily declined to 4,000 in 1860. The slaves, however, increased from 3,000 in 1800 to 7,000 in 1820, and slightly increased thereafter—or, in the course of sixty years 4,000 slaves replaced 3,000 whites. The slaveholding families increased from 520 in 1800 to 760 in 1810, maintained their number for the following decade, then declined to 540 in 1860, while the scale of average slaveholding was more than doubling in size and the scale of the largest unit in slaveholding was quadrupling. The number of non-slaveholding white families declined continuously from some 800 in the year 1800 to little more than 200 in 1860.<sup>16</sup> That is to say, when the land was fresh at the beginning of the century, and the cotton industry was an infant, the farmers were in fairly full possession; but the planters were already coming in with a rush which continued for two

<sup>15</sup> The same conditions prevailed, of course, in the tobacco zone. A citizen of Halifax County, Virginia, wrote in 1835: "The spirit of emigration here is entirely at war with the spirit of improvement. Men constantly say, 'Why improve? I am going in a short time to the west.' Others again, 'My land will support me as long as I live, and my children will, as soon as they are of age, go out.'"—*Farmers' Register*, 3:508 (December 1835).

<sup>16</sup> For fuller data and discussion, see U. B. Phillips, "The Origin and Growth of the Southern Black Belts," in *American Historical Review*, 11:810-813 (July 1906).

decades and filled the county to its fullest for the whole antebellum period. Prodded by planters from the eastward who offered to buy their farms, and lured by the free, fresh lands of the West, the farmers, in homely phrase, cleared, cropped, and cleared out. After 1820 an occasional planter also sold and moved, but the bulk of them stayed and enlarged their holdings of both land and slaves.

In the stress of competition every man in such a region of shallow soil faced an alternative of moving or improving. The farmers most copiously moved;<sup>17</sup> the planters more commonly improved. Among them were the first to resort to horizontal plowing, the first also to buy guano and other fertilizers to replenish the plant food in their soil, and the most active in seed selection and in experimenting with new crops.<sup>18</sup> All this was no more than was to have been expected; for the planters had leisure, which the farmers had not, and by reason of their scale the planters had prospect of richer profits from any successful innovation. What was not to be expected is that latter-day students should fail to see the probabilities and actualities in the case.

When the small remainder of the suitable climatic zone had come to be occupied—dealing now with the prospect in 1860—opportunity for enhancing fortune by migration must have dwindled, and pressure to improve methods must have increased upon all the population. This need not have brought a decline of the plantation system, though it would impinge upon the

<sup>17</sup> This process was not without contemporary comment. In 1838, for example, R. B. Buckner wrote concerning his neighborhood in Fauquier County, Va.: "The farms . . . are generally rather large, with a strong, but very natural tendency to accumulation in the hands of the few, to the exclusion of the many. 'The rich are becoming richer,' but the poor, not being willing 'to become poorer,' are going where they can 'get richer' too—they are going to 'the great West.'"—*Farmers' Register*, 6:458 (Nov. 1, 1838).

<sup>18</sup> A Virginian who signed himself "Conservator" did not exaggerate greatly when he wrote in 1836: "wealth is not always (nor indeed often) accompanied by education, intelligence, and public spirit—nor does poverty always banish these qualities and their valuable effects. But yet no one can deny that every benefit from these sources that has served to improve the state of agriculture, has been owing to the occupiers of large farms."—*Farmers' Register*, 4:566 (Jan. 1, 1837).

régime of slavery. Already in the fifties planters far and wide were employing Irish gangs to dig their ditches, build their levees, and perform other tasks involving exposure or strain.<sup>19</sup> They were embracing a new means to cherish the lives, health, strength, and goodwill of their precious slaves. In addition they were seeking increasingly to raise the level and broaden the scope of slave capacity and to find special openings for such of their slaves as developed special aptitudes. The economic problem as regards personnel put emphasis of course upon rewards as well as upon opportunities for skilled work by slaves, and this suggested the relaxation of the restraints of slavery. That more was not accomplished in this line was due in part to the abolition agitation, the repercussion of which in the South put reactionary emphasis upon the race problem and police.

The interesting and not wholly hideous career of the slave-plantation system was cut short by revolution imposed by force from without. Abolition was followed by reconstruction—not merely the radical rule known to political historians, but simultaneously a homegrown industrial reorganization, achieved painfully and piecemeal.

Many folk of the old régime were destroyed by the war—not merely soldiers on the battlefield, but civilians white and black, driven or lured from shelter, sustenance, and sanitation. Slaves died by uncounted thousands, and many of their masters were utterly broken. The case of Thomas Hamilton Cooper of "Hopeton" on the Altamaha River is an example. Sir Charles Lyell, recognizing him as a distinguished fellow-naturalist, paid him a long visit in 1846 and made laudatory notes upon the library, the household, and the plantation with its five hundred slaves.<sup>20</sup> Another pen has left an account of his burial in 1866, after his death in poverty and despair:

The steps of the church were broken down, so we had to walk up a plank to get in; the roof was fallen in, so that the sun streamed down on our heads; while the seats were all cut up and marked with the names of Northern soldiers, who had been quartered there during the war. . . . The funeral party arrived. The coffin was

<sup>19</sup> Cf. U. B. Phillips, *American Negro Slavery*, 301-302 (New York, 1918).

<sup>20</sup> Lyell, *Second Visit to the United States*, 1:328-363.

in a cart drawn by one miserable horse, and was followed by the Cooper family on foot, having come this way from the landing, two miles off. From the cart to the grave the coffin was carried by four old family negroes, faithful to the end.<sup>21</sup>

The survivors of the cataclysm had to solve the problem of economic life afresh under conditions of general derangement and almost universal poverty. The landholders possessed land and managerial experience—and worthless Confederate currency. The freedmen had liberty, and little else but a residual acquiescence in the necessity of working for a living.

Crop sharing was adopted in some quarters of the cotton belt as early as 1865, and crop liens came quickly after—the one to relink labor with land and management in the absence of money, the other to link all these to banks or merchants when credit was imperative but land so cheap that mortgageable values were inadequate. The lien laid fresh emphasis upon the staple crop; and crop sharing tended to stereotype schedules in order to diminish the points of possible friction between the two parties to each contract. Tenancy at fixed rentals also attained considerable vogue; but this promoted soil exhaustion by divorcing the temporary interest of the tenant from the permanent interest of the proprietor.<sup>22</sup> In any case the cluster of cabins near the landowner's dwelling was generally abandoned, and isolated houses instead were scattered over the land.<sup>23</sup> The freedmen had fairly copious opportunity to procure farms of their own, as may be gathered from the fact, for example, that as late as the Census of 1900 the average value of farm land throughout the State of Mississippi was reckoned at \$6.30 per acre, as compared with sevenfold that sum in Illinois. But improvidence was so ingrained in the field Negroes that the development along this line was far less than might otherwise have been expected.

As an example of plantations operated on the crop-sharing basis, the system and experience on "Dunleith," which lies in the Yazoo-Mississippi delta, have been so clearly and cogently set forth by

<sup>21</sup> Leigh, *Ten Years on a Georgia Plantation*, 46-47.

<sup>22</sup> E. M. Banks, *The Economics of Land Tenure in Georgia* (New York, 1905); R. P. Brooks, *The Agrarian Revolution in Georgia, 1865-1912* (Madison, Wis., 1914).

<sup>23</sup> D. C. Barrow, "A Georgia Plantation," *Scribner's Monthly*, 21:830-836 (April 1881).



its owner, Alfred H. Stone, in a book so widely known,<sup>24</sup> that I need not discuss this type in detail. Suffice it is to say that under the most effective management crop sharing implies nearly as full supervision as does wage labor.<sup>25</sup>

Among wage-labor plantations in the cotton belt the most notable has been that of James M. Smith in Oglethorpe County, Georgia, where the land, as has been noted above, was considerably depleted before his day. Smith began as a youth in 1866 with a one-horse farm. Undaunted by crop failure from drought in his first year, he persevered so thriftily and prospered so largely that by 1904 he had accumulated some 23,000 acres of land, from which he was deriving an income of about \$100,000 a year.<sup>26</sup> At this time he had scores of convicts on lease from the State of Georgia and hundreds of laborers on wages, many of them bound by voluntary indenture for terms as long as five years. His contracts with these provided, on locally printed forms, that he was to furnish board, lodging, clothes, and washing, to pay wages of stipulated amount on a specified day of each year, and to teach the apprentice a specified trade, usually that of farming. The laborer, on his part, bound himself to work faithfully, to "respect and obey all orders and commands with respect to the business" and "demean" himself "orderly and soberly" for the full term of the contract, and to account for all loss of time except in case of temporary sickness continuing not longer than six days at any one time. This contemplated a bunk-house basis for a stag personnel. Doubtless there were contracts of other sorts for the numerous laborers who had families. As to the specifications of these I failed to take note when on a visit to the plantation twenty years ago, perhaps because I was diverted by the phenomena of a convict camp, the huge barns, the stalwart mules, the many handicrafts, the model dairy, the plantation railroad, the cottonseed oil mill, the corps of boy messengers on the planter's piazza steps at Smithonia, and the crops which were

<sup>24</sup> A. H. Stone, *Studies in the American Race Problem* (New York, 1908).

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Carl Kelsey, *The Negro Farmer* (Chicago, 1903).

<sup>26</sup> Harry Hodgson, "A Great Farmer at Work," *World's Work*, 9:5723-5733 (January 1905).

far more flourishing than was common in that quarter of the State. The Smithonia establishment had so many peculiar features as to make it rather a demonstration of what might conceivably be done than an example of what was at all commonly accomplished in the piedmont cotton zone. In cotton culture, and in tobacco likewise, tenancy in some form was by far the most common recourse.

In Carolina rice and Louisiana sugar, on the other hand, large-scale industry under unit control was wellnigh imperative; and this led to wage labor as almost the sole reliance from immediately after the abolition of slavery. Plantations were reorganized intact, and the Negro cabins remained clustered. Pay rolls were instituted, overseers were styled managers, and drivers were rechristened captains for greater dignity. Strikes were not unknown; but gang or task work was the normal order of the day, and efficient routine the key to success. The financial risk was concentrated upon the planters, whom vicissitudes or ineptitude occasionally bankrupted; but new entrepreneurs generally appeared to replace those who failed, except in the rice industry, which by force of competition from Louisiana and Texas has dwindled almost to the vanishing point in its old habitat.

The sugar régime may be illustrated from the diary of work on Corinne Plantation, lying just below New Orleans, for the year 1876.<sup>27</sup> The milling of the crop of the preceding year continued to the middle of January. Then, while for a short time a gang of Irishmen were levelling certain fields on special contract, Negroes began plowing, with two men and four mules to each of eight plows for the heavy work, which was first the deep stirring of the soil alongside the dormant "rattoons" and then, beginning in late February, the fresh planting of fields in which the three-year cycle of sugar cane was to begin anew. For the planting and cultivating season additional Negroes were engaged in February; and early in March the force was recruited with twenty Portuguese laborers. For March 18 the record runs: "Hoe hands left the field, because they said the task was too large." Five days later

<sup>27</sup> Manuscript in private possession.

the management reduced the daily hoeing stint by one third, and work was resumed. From the beginning of May to the middle of July the fields were cultivated with lighter plows, drawn by one or two mules; and the hoeing continued till the first of August. With the crop now "laid by," miscellaneous work filled the time of a reduced corps in the late summer and early fall. Harvest began October 26, with an enlarged force, paid a dollar a day.

For November 7 the diary reads: "Today being the election day, no field work was done, only 12 white men cording cane at sugar house." This was at the climax of radical rule in Louisiana—the famous Hayes-Tilden contest, which eventually required an electoral commission at Washington to determine for whom the electoral vote of the State should be counted. On election days in subsequent years there were doubtless not so many Negroes absent from the plantation. On November 8 the mill began to grind the cane. The diary reports: "We had but a small force; but considering today being after election day, everything went off well enough."

With the harvest now at its crest, and every hour precious for getting the crop out of danger from frost, Sundays were included in the work schedule, though about half the field force usually took half of each Sunday off. The normal distribution of the personnel on the pay roll at the height of the grinding was about 50 cutting cane, 16 loading the carts, 8 hauling, and 36 operating the mill. The mill doubtless ran night and day; but this was so much a matter of course that the diarist did not note it. From the 280 acres in cane the yield, which was heavily diminished by severe frost and subsequent souring of cane, was 534,000 pounds of sugar and 820 barrels of molasses. There were also gathered as auxiliary products 1,640 bushels of corn and 117 loads of pea-vine and other hay.

As later decades have passed, the rôle of the immigrants has lessened in the South; and nowadays many of the Negroes are seeking the higher wages at Northern industrial centers. What will come of this remains to be seen; but the blacks who stay in the Southern fields do not appear to be experiencing any drastic

change. A newcomer in Georgia, Frances Butler Leigh, the daughter of Fanny Kemble—whose book is an implicit commentary upon her mother's *Journal*—wrote in 1866:

I generally found that if I wanted a thing done I first had to tell the negroes to do it, then show them how, and finally do it myself. Their way of managing not to do it was very ingenious, for they always were perfectly good-tempered, and received my orders with, "Dat's so, missus; just as missus says," and then always somehow or other left the thing undone.<sup>28</sup>

A migrant to Mississippi, having chafed for ten years at similar experiences, wrote in 1919: "A field negro lives in a kind of perpetual doze, a dreamy haze. . . . Nothing disturbs for any length of time the uniform and listless torpor of his existence. . . . Life moves at a low pressure; at times the wheels can barely be seen to turn."<sup>29</sup>

The tether binding the two races in a single system has been broken by many individuals—Negroes have set up for themselves, and whites have dispensed altogether with Negro labor. But with most the tether has merely been lengthened, to the mingled gratification and regret of nearly all concerned. The rural Negroes in bulk remain primitive and slack. Poverty has been a clog upon the whole Southern community; and Negro slackness, along with poor soil, has been a chief cause of poverty.

The most common tether continues to be the plantation system, with tenancy the most widely prevalent basis. But whether the scheme be that of wages or crop sharing, there is not much turnover except perhaps at the year end; habitations are fixed for the year; life is lived in family units; and white folk, often of high grade, are tolerantly and affably, if patronizingly, concerned close at hand with the improvement not only of Negro work but of Negro life.

But we have not come to praise the plantation, and certainly not to bury it. That system now flourishes in California and Colorado, in the West Indies and the East Indies; and its introduction even into England is advocated as a means of improve-

<sup>28</sup> Leigh, *Ten Years on a Georgia Plantation*, 57.

<sup>29</sup> Howard Snyder, "Plantation Pictures," *Atlantic Monthly*, 127:175 (February 1921).

ment.<sup>30</sup> It is idle to expect its early demise in the "black belt" of the United States, where the census takers in a confessedly incomplete survey in 1910 found 39,073 plantations operating on a tenant basis with as many as five tenant families each, to say nothing of the many estates cultivated by wage labor.<sup>31</sup>

#### ULRICH B. PHILLIPS

<sup>30</sup> Sir A. Daniel Hall has written, concerning English agriculture: "For obvious reasons the small farm is less efficient, less economic of human labor than the large one. It is handicapped physically in that the size of its fields does not permit of the effective use of machinery or the orderly disposition of labor. Overhead charges are high; the capitalization of the small farm is excessive. . . . Intellectually the small farming community tends to become hidebound and unprogressive." The road to future improvement, he continues, is toward large corporation farms, in which profit-sharing may well be a feature. "The unit of farming should be something between two and ten thousand acres of mixed farming, and the management should be a hierarchy of director and assistants such as prevails in any great business."—*Atlantic Monthly*, 135:684-685 (May 1925).

<sup>31</sup> U. S. Census Office, *Thirteenth Census*, 1910, 5:877-889.



## NEWS NOTES AND COMMENTS

### SEVENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY

The seventy-fifth anniversary of the Act establishing the United States Department of Agriculture and of the Land-Grant College Act, and the fiftieth anniversary of the passage of the Hatch Act, were observed in programs sponsored jointly by the Association of Land Grant Colleges and Universities and the United States Department of Agriculture on November 14-18, 1937. At a dinner honoring the pioneers, held at the Willard Hotel, Washington, D. C., on November 14, J. L. Hills, dean of the College of Agriculture and director of the Agricultural Experiment Station of the University of Vermont presided, and Eugene Davenport, former dean of the College of Agriculture and director of the Agricultural Experiment Station at the University of Illinois, Bradford Knapp, president of Texas Technological College, A. F. Woods, director of the graduate school of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, and John R. Mohler, chief of the U. S. Bureau of Animal Industry, spoke.

On November 15, the program commemorated Lincoln's contributions to American agriculture. A. R. Mann of the General Education Board presided at a wreath-laying ceremony at the Lincoln Memorial, by representatives of the Association of Land Grant Colleges and Universities, the United States Department of Agriculture, and the national farm organizations. Following the ceremony, E. W. Sikes, president of Clemson Agricultural College, spoke on "Thomas G. Clemson"; H. W. Mumford, dean of the College of Agriculture, and director of the Agricultural Experiment Station, and of Extension Service, University of Illinois, on "Jonathan Turner"; and M. L. Wilson, Under Secretary of Agriculture, on "Abraham Lincoln."

On November 16, Jefferson's contributions to American agriculture were memorialized. Following the laying of a wreath on his grave at Monticello, Henry A. Wallace, Secretary of Agriculture, spoke on "Thomas Jefferson; Farmer, Educator, and Democrat," with J. A. Burruss, president of the Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute, presiding.

The November 17 program was in commemoration of Washington's agricultural contributions. After the wreath-laying ceremony at the tomb in Mount Vernon, Alfred Atkinson, president of the University of Arizona and president of the Association of Land Grant Colleges and Universities spoke, and Henry A. Wallace, Secretary of Agriculture, read a brief address by President Roosevelt. Harry L. Brown, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture, presided.

A session devoted to the significance of rural arts and crafts to rural life and inaugurating an exhibit of rural handicrafts was held in the patio of the administration building of the U. S. Department of Agriculture on November 18. Allen Eaton of the Russell Sage Foundation and John H. Finley, editor of the *New York Times*, were the main speakers, with C. L. Christensen, dean of the College of Agriculture and director of the Agricultural Experiment Station of The University of Wisconsin, presiding.